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ABSTRACT

For over 25 years, the Manhattan Country School, a private school for kindergarten through grade 8, has made intense and successful efforts to maintain a racially and ethnically diverse student population and staff, partly through building an awareness of human diversity into its curriculum and instruction. Recent interest in multicultural education in practice led to the creation of this report to explain the policies and practices of the school as they operate for each age group. Chapter 1 reviews some of the debates surrounding multicultural education. Chapter 2 describes the school's own analysis of social conditions that stimulated creation of its educational programs. The involvement of parents from the "Black and Latin Caucus" in shaping the school's philosophy, and the current discourse about gender equity are described. Other chapters consider the multicultural programs in the Lower School (through grade 4), the Upper School (grades 5 through 8), and in the school's special programs. The school attempts to give its students an intellectual understanding of cultural diversity as well as experience with diverse groups through in-school and community-service interactions. (SLD)

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ED 371 049

Education in a Diverse and Unequal Society

Manhattan Country School's Multicultural Program

Adrian Bennett

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Prologue

Why a Report on Manhattan Country School's Multicultural Program Now?

In 1992 I was asked by Manhattan Country School in New York City to write a descriptive report on "multiculturalism" in the School's curriculum. For over twenty-five years, Manhattan Country School had made intense and highly successful efforts to maintain a racially and ethnically diverse student population and staff, had built into its curriculum and instruction an awareness of human diversity, and had worked hard to give its students an experience and an intellectual understanding of the diversity of our society and of the world's societies. Included in these efforts were regular expressions of a social vision of equality and inclusion for all, as well as of a recognition of the failures of American soci-

ety to provide that equality and to include all of its people in the sharing of the wealth and resources they had produced.

Yet administrators and teachers at the School felt an increasing need to clarify their position — for themselves and for others — with respect to diversity and difference. There were a number of reasons for this need. Americans seemed to have arrived at a point in their history where they were becoming increasingly aware of their differences. White, European-origin Americans, who may have believed they were *the* model of what an American was supposed to be, found themselves encountering in their everyday lives new immigrants from Southeast and South Asia, the Mideast, Africa, and Latin America.

Certainly the mass media was giving a lot of attention to diversity, the various ethnic groups who make up our society, and particularly to the racial and ethnic conflicts in this country and around the world. If that is any indication of their consciousness, Americans were concerned about the social categories — race, ethnicity, culture, gender most especially — into which they are accustomed to place individuals. And there was also a lot of talk going on in public education about the need to "include" in the curriculum those people whose contributions to American society had been previously neglected.What social groups had been excluded before? Did the exclusions — or distorted presentations — in school textbooks of such groups as African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans negatively affect the children of these communities? What should children of European heritage learn about other groups? Who should be included? What form should a multicultural curriculum take? Is "inclusion" of this or that group really the issue, or should the main concern be something else, such as achieving equity between individuals? Would "including" hitherto excluded groups foster divisiveness rather than social harmony? Wasn't there a "common core" of an "American culture" that should take precedence over the concern for diversity? Would an emphasis on different social and cultural groups displace teaching the "basics"? Was "inclusion" of "representatives" from the various ethnic and cultural groups in the society really the issue? Wasn't it more important to learn about the relationships *between* these different groups throughout our history and in our contemporary world?

Various movements had emerged to revise public school curricula in social studies and related subject areas, and to make them treat different groups more equitably. One example was the New York State Board of Regents' publication of a report issued in July 1989 by the "Task Force on Minorities" appointed by Thomas Sobel, the State Commissioner of Education. The report, called "A Curriculum of Inclusion," was intended to serve as a guide to the development of a new social studies curriculum that would "include" more of the diversity existing in American society. It also criticized "an educational system centered around the eurocentric world view . . . that perpetuates processes of negative socialization for African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos and Native Americans."[1]

The California State Board of Education went much further than New York State, not only issuing an extensive curriculum guideline, but also commissioning new social studies and history textbooks which "called on teachers to recognize that the history of community, state, region, nation and world must reflect the experiences of men and women and of different racial, religious and ethnic groups."[2] The curriculum guide emphasized the need for young people "to understand how people in other times and places have grappled with fundamental questions of truth, justice, and personal responsibility and to ponder how we deal with the same issues today."[3]

During the early 1990s the New York City Board of Education was also working on its own version of a multicultural curriculum, the "Rainbow Curriculum," which finally appeared in 1992. This curriculum was intended to foster tolerance and under-

standing in children of all the different groups living in the city and nation, including gays and lesbians.

All of these movements to revise the public school curriculum met with vociferous political opposition. Debates raged. One result was that the New York State Board of Regents withdrew "A Curriculum of Inclusion." Commissioner Sobel dismissed the commission that had produced it to form a new commission that, it turned out, would seek a less confrontational language to express their philosophy of "One Nation, Many Peoples," in a report issued in 1991. This report made it clear, in a rather more modulated tone of voice, that New York State was not imposing an "Afrocentric" curriculum on its public schools, although it did reassert the need for "all students, whatever their race or ethnicity, to learn more about those who are different from themselves."[4]

The initial publication of the new textbooks for California's multicultural social studies curriculum also generated a lot of heat. Some school boards — including the city of Oakland's, on whose school board sat a majority of people of color, and whose students were largely people of color — refused to use the new textbooks, even though that meant losing substantial state funds for the purchase of books and materials. And more recently the "Rainbow Curriculum" developed by the New York City Board of Education has encountered some rather loud, angry voices who played a role in the eventual dismissal of Joseph Fernandez, Chancellor of the city's public schools.[5]

Those engaged in these debates might benefit from taking a close look at Manhattan Country School. Many of these "controversies" were long familiar to MCS teachers and staff. They were also familiar with the fears surrounding social and cultural diversity — and of the racism — that often lurked just below the surface of conflicts over what to teach in the public schools. Racism, social and cultural diversity — these were issues MCS teachers dealt with every day in their own classrooms, helping children learn about diversity, helping them overcome racism, helping them learn how to work cooperatively with each other. After all, MCS had concerned itself for nearly three decades with many of the same issues that now were becoming a prominent part of public school discourse. They felt — rightly I think — that they had something to contribute to these debates. From its inception the School has presented itself as a model of what a multicultural perspective in education should be — not so much for other private schools, but for public education generally. With multiculturalism emerging into prominence in the public discourse with all the usual attendant thunder and lightning, this therefore seemed a significant time to position the School's educational philosophy with respect to these developments in American society and education.

Gus Trowbridge, Director of MCS, as well as other staff at the School certainly made clear to me their troubled recognition that the promise which seemed to bloom after the successes of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s had never quite reached full flower and fruition. It seemed to Gus and other founders of MCS at that earlier time that racism and other forms of inequity would be defeated in American society, or at least that progress was being made. Yet today's news is full of stories illustrating the validity of the old apothegm, "What goes around comes around": racism, exploitation, the neglect of the less powerful and the impoverished seem to flourish like hardy perennials that only die when plucked out by the roots. Those roots have been nourished throughout the nation's history for so long that we might well suggest that, if there is any such thing as an "American culture" that culture has been fertile soil which never quite seems to become exhausted as far as the continued growth of racism is concerned. One thing culture is about is the transmission of perspectives, ways of being, the most basic values and judgments of a people from one generation to

another. That is why education is so important, for it is not just about acquiring "skills." Education is always about the transmission of values. Manhattan Country School has since its inception in the late 1960s raised its voice against racism, inequity and injustice, as well as for recognition, understanding and celebration of human diversity. Given the apparent stagnation of progress along these lines in American society, now seemed an important time for MCS to publish its multicultural perspective in the form of a report that could be made accessible to an audience even wider than those the School had already reached.

We may add to these considerations the fact that some parents of the students at Manhattan Country School had also expressed concern about multiculturalism in the curriculum. Some were worried not enough attention was being given, for example, to the history and cultures of African peoples. Some were concerned that too much attention was being given to helping students "get along" with each other and not enough was being given to "academics." In an economy in which job and career options are dwindling, competition between individuals has intensified. Perhaps MCS students would come out understanding how to get along with all different kinds of people, but would they be "competitive" enough when it came to, let's say, getting into the better high schools in New York City, or the better universities, or the better jobs? Neither of these concerns, which on the surface seem to be in opposition to each other, was particularly new among MCS parents, but given the general public discourse — and its attendant confusions — about diversity in U. S. society, such concerns seemed to justify concentrating some additional attention on the relevant issues.

In fact, with the recent growth of Manhattan Country School's reputation as a model of a multicultural school, many teachers and staff at the School have been invited to conduct workshops for other educational institutions regarding its curricula and programs. The staff expressed its need for some guidelines, and for some coherent documentation that would bring together the School's philosophy and the ever-so-important learning activities that go on in the School from day to day.

One final reason for compiling this report needs to be given here, for it illustrates something important about the School that will become more evident in succeeding pages of this report: the staff at the School is continuously engaged in a variety of processes of self-development. In recent years many staff members had expressed a concern with the School's treatment of one particular aspect of human diversity, that of gender. To what extent did the existing policies regarding equity apply to considerations of gender? What were the relationships between the concern for racial, cultural, economic equity and gender? Prominence had been given to the issue of racism in earlier conceptions of equity in the School's curricula and programs. But had the society changed in such a way — for example, changes in family structure, changes in the workplace — that an increased emphasis on gender equity needed to emerge? The staff initiated a series of in-house study seminars on gender issues and eventually developed a five-year comprehensive project involving staff as well as parents. It would not have made sense simply to take an "add-on" approach: "Oh, we dealt with race, now let's add gender." MCS staff members do not typically treat their curricula and instructional programs like new model cars to which may be added various accessories drawn from a list of "options." Whatever they create for their students must be carefully integrated with what has gone before. This report, while hardly at the center of the gender project, can therefore also be viewed as a part of the process of reflection and analysis that project represents.

A Personal Note: Encounters with Diversity

I accepted the role of investigating and writing about MCS and its multicultural

program for a number of reasons. I have been involved for some fifteen years with the issues of diversity and difference in the public schools, working in various capacities as researcher, writer, and teacher, and as a developer of inservice training programs for educators. Although I had not planned to work in schools after getting my doctorate in linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley, I found myself conducting a modest research project as a postdoctoral fellow in anthropology in a Bureau of Indian Affairs school on the Papago (Tohono O'odham) reservation outside Tucson, Arizona.

That initial experience of fieldwork in the BIA school made a lasting impression on me, particularly regarding the question of how schools teach us to deal with social diversity. I witnessed one "Anglo" teacher, whose qualifications for the job was twenty years of military service (giving him "seniority" in the federally-funded BIA program) yelling angrily at sixth-grade Papago children whose faces wore terrified expressions. This teacher once observed privately to me that "these kids" were "lazy" and didn't care about learning. The school was implementing a bilingual program, but he refused to allow bilingual paraprofessionals to work in his classroom. He felt it was a waste of time to teach them in their native language. "English is the language of America," he argued, "They've got to be forced to learn it. They're better off if they forget Papago." He did not seem very concerned about the effects of such a philosophy on the children's cultural identity and sense of community. At the same time, I observed another "Anglo" teacher who was striving to learn the Tohono O'odham language — which is quite different from English — in order to be able to communicate better with his third graders. I talked at length to the Papago principal whose dedication to the education of these children was profound.

I also spent many hours shadowing Maria, a Papago paraprofessional, around from classroom to classroom, watching her work with the children. When teachers allowed her to work in small, intimate groups, she established such a rapport with them that they were not only comfortable, they also showed a great deal of pleasure and absorption in whatever she was helping them to learn. It wasn't really so much any training she had had in teaching that enabled her to do this. Rather, she simply was "herself" — her Tohono O'odham self — in relating to the children. She talked to them in a soft voice. She didn't demand that they raise their hands and wait to be called on before speaking, or that they talk one at a time. She let them sit in small groups in circles. The children responded in kind, talking and laughing in soft tones while they worked together.

I saw how difficult it was for Maria and the children to communicate when another of the "Anglo" teachers insisted she stand at the front of the room with the children's desks all lined up in "neat" rows, a rectangular model quite alien to these children. In short, I saw how smoothly things worked when she and the children were allowed to "be" Tohono O'odham, and how conflicted situations became when teachers who thought they represented the "mainstream" of American society tried to impose their own cultural ways on her and the children.

Soon after finishing this postdoctoral work I worked for the Tucson Unified School District in the dual capacities of program evaluator and researcher on language skills in a school in South Tucson, where 95% of the children were Mexican American. And I saw again how, when children are allowed to be themselves, and when recognition is given to the language and culture they bring from home, they not only could learn, but they could take great pleasure in the process. And I also saw how, when teachers, administrators, or even their own parents in some cases, failed to understand the need for children to explore their world from the vantage point of their own cultural identity, the children could become "problem learners," could begin to manifest "behavior problems."

Later, I came to New York to work for the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, which gave me the chance to conduct research projects in an East Harlem school, as well as to do extensive studies of the relationships that obtained between school staff and Latino parents and children at the Lexington School for the Deaf. A subsequent experience as a Fulbright Scholar teaching sociolinguistics to teachers enrolled in a training program on bilingual education for rural children in the high Peruvian Andes who spoke Quechua or Aymara as their mother tongues offered me insights into a whole new area of cultural and linguistic diversity in education.

So my interest in "multiculturalism" in education was nothing new when MCS approached me. And I knew something about MCS already. Michèle Solá, my devoted wife and companion for a decade, who has been the Spanish teacher at the School since 1982, had already taught me a lot about the School. I knew that the School made considerable claims about its multicultural program, I knew some of the teachers and administrators of course, and I had heard about the School's innovative programs. I was certainly familiar with the staff's devotion to the School as expressed in the long hours Michèle and others gave to their work.

Aside from the work at the BIA school in Arizona, I had not been impressed with the ways public schools deal with children who are non-white, non-Anglo, non-"mainstream" (as they were misleadingly labeled). Despite having seen some exciting things going on in some classrooms, having met and observed some teachers who were sensitive to cultural diversity, I was still pretty discouraged by much of what I had seen. What seemed to be most lacking in public education was a vision of what our society ought to be and of what role education must play in making America live up to that vision.[6] I wanted to see something different, something better, something that could claim consistency between policy and practice, between the need to make this a better society and the reality of what goes on in daily life in the classroom. The offer from MCS, giving me pretty much full rein regarding how I would go about getting my information for this report, came at an opportune time.

Perspectives and Sources

The report that follows, while commissioned by the School, is ultimately my own. I did not approach the School with an idea of "publicizing" or "promoting" it. I consider myself a social scientist, not a public relations specialist (I wouldn't be any good at that, anyway). Neither am I a spokesperson for the School. What I say in the report derives as much from my own experiences in education as it does from any "official" stance of the School itself. Nevertheless, my goal was not so much to give voice to my own opinions, but to approach the task as a linguist and anthropologist — to take, in short, an "ethnographic" perspective. That meant allowing the people in the School their own voice, letting them speak for themselves as much as possible, and filtering what they said through what I was able to observe them doing in their classrooms and in their staff meetings.

My time was limited. Available funds did not permit me to do what I would have wanted ideally to do: spend most of a school year "living" in the School, observing and participating in classroom activities, field trips, special assemblies, staff meetings, etc. For it is through the accumulation of such seemingly casual details that the important happenings in the daily life of the School can be reexperienced and understood, understood not only in an experiential way. I have been able to display a few such examples in the descriptions of some of the various classrooms at MCS, but much more could be, and should be done. It is ultimately this level of understanding that will, I believe, prove most useful to the people who do the daily work of teaching in our public and private schools. All the theory-making and policy-making in the world — important as it is for setting the stage — will not tell you "how it

is done." How are the links established between the vision, the policies, the pedagogical philosophies, and the learning, the talk, the play, and the work that goes on in the daily life of the School? In a future, expanded version of this report, I hope to be able to produce examples of everyday life at MCS showing in detail how the MCS community recreates itself daily *as* a community.

Similarly, although I do discuss some aspects of the participation of a group of Black and Latino parents at one point in the School's history in Chapter Two, no attempt has been made here to provide a full account of parent participation.

But I did interview several of the teachers as well as all of the administrators. I studied some of the many available documents, such as issues of the *MCS Newsletter* published over the years, and the Founding Statement which was so important in laying out the basic principles of the School's philosophy at the very inception of the School. I also relied quite heavily on Michèle Sola's doctoral dissertation, the first chapter of which provides an extensive and detailed discussion of the founding of the School, of the development of the School's educational philosophy, and of various issues that have arisen over the years.[7] From January to June of 1992 I did a number of intermittent observations in classrooms — not enough to write a "definitive ethnography" of daily life that would satisfy the anthropologist side of me, but enough to get a sense of how some of the broad principles on which curriculum and instruction rest are played out in the daily life of the classroom. I was also able to glean valuable information, insights and suggestions from attending two meetings with the entire staff to discuss the report as it was in the making.

I came away with some very favorable impressions of MCS, particularly of the vision of an equitable and just society, and of a well-thought-out pedagogical philosophy that could be considered the core and foundation on which most of what happens at the School relies. MCS is, at least in my experience of schools, unique. Its multicultural program deserves the attention not only of other private schools, but of public education as well. It has much to teach us. This is not to say that, at the end of it all, some questions did not still linger in my own mind — questions regarding the wider application of MCS's program, and questions regarding the role this, or any educational program, can play in making the changes in our society that I believe are needed. But in many ways, even these questions may well find their answers in the educational policies and practices that have evolved at MCS over the years of its existence.

One impression that grew stronger as I conducted my study of the School and as I composed this report, is that we can best understand multiculturalism at MCS if we put it in a historical perspective. In very important ways, as documented in the School's own archives, MCS was created in response to specific conditions in American society, or at least to a particular analysis of those conditions — most especially that of racial inequality — as well as of the roles of public and private schools in relationship to those conditions. Those social conditions posed certain questions, and in a very real sense the School is an answer to them. Over the years it has created many answers, in fact, for the questions are complex and multifarious.

The Plan of The Report

Before getting into a description of the School itself, it seems useful to point to a few of the salient features of multiculturalism, or of diversity in U. S. society, and of how debates over the related issues are played out in educational discourse. That can help us understand the multicultural program at MCS as an important part of a broader social and historical context. In Chapter One, then, I characterize some of the debates regarding multicultural education, attempting to highlight the questions diversity has raised in our history and the answers the society has

tended to give to those questions. The more we reflect on what lies beneath the "culture wars" and on the implications of particular points of view regarding multiculturalism, the better position we will be in to appreciate the role MCS has played in education, as well as the potential its program may have for the creation of other schools and educational programs in the future.

The School, particularly through its founders, has its own analysis of the social conditions that stimulated the creation of its unique educational program. I describe that analysis in Chapter Two of this report, including some of the responses developed by the School over its first three decades, particularly the educational philosophy that has been articulated—sometimes in the face of considerable controversy and much debate and discussion. I also discuss the School's educational philosophy as it pertains to multiculturalism, including its evolution through some of the discourse — itself occasionally productive of stormy weather — that has taken place within the School over time. This Chapter describes two such discourses, one centering around the involvement of a group of parents who referred to themselves as the "Black And Latin Caucus"; and the current discourse in the School regarding the role of gender equity in an equitable educational program.

Succeeding chapters present a description of the multicultural program itself, dividing it into the Lower School (Chapter Three); the Upper School (Chapter Four); and the School's special programs such as the Spanish and library programs, and the MCS Farm (Chapter Five). These divisions reflect organizational structures of MCS itself. The School enrolls about 185 students, dividing them first into two general groups — the Upper School, which consists of the 5th-8th grades, with one class at each grade level; and the Lower School, consisting of one class each of children aged 4-5, 5-6, 6-7, 7-8, 8-9, and 9-10.

The report concludes with a return to the philosophical and ethical issues raised in Chapter One.

This report represents a modest effort to introduce, with at least some intellectual depth and sense of descriptive detail, Manhattan Country School's unique, creative and effective perspective on education and its role in a very diverse and rapidly changing society that has not yet fully realized its democratic ideals. It also tries to show how the history of the School, the policies and philosophies that have evolved, and the social and pedagogical practices in the School's communities in city and country can, at their best, work harmoniously together in ways that show how a democratic education can be created that is worthy of the name.

Notes

1. A Curriculum of Inclusion, Report of the Commissioner's Task Force on Minorities: Equity and Excellence, July 1989, p. 35.
2. *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve,* California State Board of Education, July 1987, p. 3.
3. *Ibid*, p. 3.
4. "One Nation, Many Peoples," A report to the New York State Board of Regents, 1991.
5. At a six-hour public hearing regarding the renewal of Chancellor Fernandez' contract, one woman testified (as reported in the *New York Times*, Feb., 11, 1993, p. B12):

   > "Children should be your priority, not a gay agenda, not multiculturalism or multi-sexualism, Carrol Wood, a member of a group called the Family Defense Council, declared, her voice ris-

ing. "That has nothing to do with education."

6. A more mundane way of putting this would be to say that our public education system lacks a philosophy and policy that are broad, analytical and critical enough to be adequate to the needs of the majority of our citizens, and certainly not to the needs of those many groups who form "the people of color" in our society. Consider the kind of discourse exemplified in the much-publicized and promoted *A Nation at Risk* report of President Reagan's Commission on Excellence in Education:

> If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all—old and young alike, affluent and poor, majority and minority. Learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the "information age" we are entering. (p. 7)

Is this doublespeak? Is making America more competitive in international markets the way to produce a just and equitable society in which everyone shares in the wealth they have produced? Well, when this country was dominant in world markets in the post WWII era was it a just and equitable society? To this concern for "the benefit of all" the authors of the report quickly add a veiled threat:

> The people of the United States need to know that individuals in our society who do not possess the levels of skill, literacy, and training essential to this new era will be effectively disenfranchised, not simply from the material rewards that accompany competent performance, but also from the chance to participate fully in our national life. (*A Nation at Risk: the Imperative for Educational Reform*. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1983, p.7)

7. Solá's dissertation covers the School's history to 1987, the year the dissertation was completed.

Chapter One
Debating Diversity

The conservative desire has been to cast the debate in terms of the West versus the Rest. And yet that's the very opposition that the pluralist wants tochallenge. Pluralism sees culture as porous, dynamic, and interactive, rather than as the fixed property of particular ethnic groups. (Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. xiv.)

Diversity? It obviously exists in this country today and it comes in many forms — ethnic, cultural, gender, political, racial, social class, etc. These are a few of the many ways we have of categorizing and defining groups of people in the world's societies. Such divisions must be important; otherwise we would not define ourselves by them. Of course, as individuals, we do not have complete control over how we will be defined by others; the options are not unlimited and the categories one "belongs" to are not always self-chosen. Nor is identity merely a mental exercise: one's racial or ethnic identity, for example, may well have evolved out of historical forces in which a particular category of people was politically oppressed and economically exploited. One's gender may have been defined in such a way that one is placed from a

very early point in life in a disadvantageous relationship to certain others of a different gender. Inequality, particularly an unequal distribution of society's resources and of power, is often an inseparable part of the social categories by which we, as a society, construct a specific kind of diversity and a particular perception of what that diversity "means."

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part I take up some general considerations about diversity, particularly as it involves U. S. society. I look at fears about the newer forms of diversity in this country and some counter arguments. In the second part, I want to discuss some of the implications these debates have for designing a multicultural curriculum, using specific examples of approaches to curriculum. In a concluding section, I will reflect on the terms we use when we talk about diversity, e.g., "culture," "ethnicity," "gender," "race," etc., and I will to make some suggestions about what it is we are grappling with when we start constructing a multicultural curriculum.

1. Diversity: Realities, Fears, Celebrations, Reflections

A Historically Diverse Society

The United States has always been a diverse society, even before its emergence as a modern nation state. The parts of the North American continent that eventually became the U. S. were socially and culturally diverse long before the European invasions. We know there were one, two or even three million people living here who were organized into hundreds of different nations, speaking anywhere from 500 to 1,000 different languages. Although today many Americans think our origins are basically Anglo, even in the colonial period, English-origin settlers comprised only about 60% of the white population. There were substantial numbers of Germans and French, as well as Scots, Irish, Dutch, Swedes and Welsh; and of course there were Spanish-speaking colonists in what is now the American Southwest and Florida. According to journalist James Crawford, in the year that Peter Stuyvesant surrendered New Netherland to the British (1664), "Manhattan Island was already home to a cacophony of nationalities — including Portuguese Jews, Spaniards, Germans, Scandinavians, Finns, Bohemians, Poles, Italians and Africans (both free citizens and slaves) — who jostled, courted, and swindled each other in eighteen different languages, not counting those of near-by Indians."[1]

The United States has always been a diverse society, even before its emergence as a modern nation state.

We also are familiar with the many waves of immigrants, particularly from certain parts of Europe, who came to America enticed by its expanding economy and pushed out by the shrinking economies of their own regions. We know about the Chinese laborers who were brought here to build the railways and work the mines of the West. We know about the Mexicans who suddenly found themselves living in a different country when the United States annexed nearly one-third of Mexico's territories. We know about the Puerto Ricans who were transformed from Spanish subjects into American dependents and eventually U. S. citizens, also through conquest. And of course we know about the forced importation of Africans to work the fields and plantations of the South.

In the early decades of nationhood, schools in the United States often reflected this diversity, giving substantial recognition to the languages and cultures of immigrant groups. Historian of education Diego Castellanos tells us that in the nineteenth century both private and public schools

> had allowed immigrant groups to incorporate linguistic and cultural traditions into the schools. . . . Wherever immigrant groups possessed sufficient political power — be they Italian, Polish, Czech, French, Dutch, German — foreign languages were

introduced into elementary and secondary schools, either as separate subjects or as languages of instruction.[2]

In a sense, these schools and educational programs were — if not truly "multicultural" — at least bicultural. They were often intended to help immigrant groups maintain their languages and native cultures. But throughout United States history, while there has been recognition and acceptance of diversity, often there has also been fear and hostility of those groups who were "different" racially, ethnically, culturally or linguistically. At different times in that history these groups included Native Americans, African Americans, Chinese and other Asians, as well as Europeans from southern and eastern Europe. Even Benjamin Franklin wanted to get rid of the German-English bilingual street signs in Philadelphia, fearing an "adulteration" of Anglo culture by Germanic peoples.[3]

Today our diversity seems somehow different. . . . This feeling of something new having emerged and continuing to expand its influence on U. S. society directly affects the debates about multicultural curriculum in schools.

A New Diversity

Today our diversity seems somehow different. We have groups of immigrants who had not come to our shores in such large numbers before: Cambodians, Vietnamese, Thais, Central Americans, Africans, Indians and Pakistanis, etc. Many of these people come from what is sometimes referred to as the "Third World" and many of their home countries are former colonies of the "First World" nations of Europe. Certainly many of these regions of the world have, at one time or another in the past, felt the heavy hand of U. S. military might and economic power. There is a history to the changing demographics of this country and its new immigrants; it is the same history that has washed us all up on the shores of the twenty-first century. This feeling of something new having emerged and continuing to expand its influence on U. S. society directly affects the debates about multicultural curriculum in schools.

Running parallel to the reformations of ethnic, cultural and other forms of diversity have been changes in the consciousness of "mainstream," particularly white mainstream, people — a cultural transformation, if you will. I refer to knowledge about "the other." This new awareness is manifested most obviously in changes in the ways we categorize our relationships to any number of things, *such as:* We used to refer to African peoples as "tribes"; some have wanted to talk about African kingdoms; we now use the phrase "ethnic groups." *Such as:* Native Americans were also once viewed as "tribes" and even before that were often viewed as subhuman by the early colonizers; today we understand they are the descendants of the indigenous peoples of the "Americas" and as such, hold important cultural knowledge that has been handed down through generations. So we talk about "nations," not "tribes," which has connotations of "savage," "primitive," "precivilized," etc. And we know now that Columbus only "discovered" America from a certain point of view; and we know that western societies, as well as many other societies throughout human history, have been patriarchal in the gendered ways power is distributed, putting women in a disadvantaged, sometimes even stigmatized position, and that still goes on.

These seemingly superficial changes may merely be the crest of the wave, underneath which swim weightier thoughts, like great whales, shadowing forth new understandings about ourselves and all the peoples of the world, and all the relationships that obtain between "us" and "them." For many, though, the "whales" have yet to surface into consciousness; perhaps our changing awareness of diversity will drive us to seek solutions to the conflicts existing between one group and another. Those conflicts often exist between people who

self-divide into separate groups — or who are divided by forces beyond their control — although they may share a position of low status and low access in the social hierarchy or may be stigmatized as members of a certain "race." "Race" remains a powerful force in the modern world, and racism cuts like a knife through the many ways we have of dividing up the mass of humanity. These thoughts cause some people a certain uneasiness.

Worrying About Diversity

If the American people's consciousness regarding diversity is changing in just these ways, some might feel a threat rather than a promise. Some people do want to celebrate the new diversity, or are at least intrigued by it and want to learn more about it, but others feel their social foundations trembling.[4] These new ideas are threatening, and the ideas and their symbolic expression have been severely attacked by a certain self-identified, "neoconservative" sector of political writers as "political correctness gone amuck."[5] And there are people who seem to be hoping it *isn't* so different from the diversities we've had in the past. There is bewilderment and confusion as well as fear and anger, and a number of writers, scholars, journalists and politicians have come forth to have their say, to stir us up about diversity, to soothe our apprehensions, to sharpen our sense of difference, or to ameliorate the differences and mediate between the different groups that comprise the society. Hence the spate of books and articles and talk-show discussions about multiculturalism already referred to in the Prologue.

Some people want to celebrate the new diversity . . . but others feel their social foundations trembling.

As an example of the worriers, two scholars who were members of the second committee appointed by Thomas Sobel, have been uneasy about the incorporation of diverse social groups in the social studies curriculum[6] of the public schools. One of them, historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. argued:

> The ethnic upsurge . . . began as a gesture of protest against the Anglocentric culture. It became a cult, and today it threatens to become a counter-revolution against the original theory of America as "one people," a common culture, a single nation.[7]

An "ethnic upsurge" that has become a "cult" certainly sounds threatening enough. It threatens our very unity as a "single nation." We had better reaffirm our allegiance to a "common culture."

Nathan Glazer, another member of the committee and a sociologist who has written a great deal on ethnic diversity in American society suggested:

> It is not the new immigrants who are arguing for multiculturalism. Most of them would be content with the education provided to the previous waves of European immigrants, which paid not a whit of attention to their ethnic or racial background, or to their distinct culture or language. A product of that kind of education, I was also quite content with it.

Glazer believes "if it were not for the poor achievement among blacks in the schools, the multicultural movement would lose much of its force."[8] He acknowledges that African Americans are not yet "fully incorporated" into American society, and therefore accepts (rather reluctantly) some degree of multiculturalism in school curricula as a way of helping them "become more like other Americans — for example, in educational achievement — not different from them." Assimilation, for Glazer a "reality" of American history, is an acceptable goal: "Most of us who embrace [multiculturalism] do so in the hope that it will overcome that apartness."[9]

Calming The Waters

While Glazer and Schlesinger worry about a "disuniting" of America, another public voice wishes to reassure them that the threat is only illusory. In one of his columns published weekly as "advertisements" by the *Sunday New York Times*,

Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, recently attempted to calm the nerves of those who fear the coming "majority minority" society — at least as regards Hispanics. Selectively citing some findings published in a survey on Hispanics in the United States,[10] Shanker argued:

> The strong attachment of Hispanic groups to this country contradicts the fear, expressed by "English Only"-type groups, that Hispanics will remain an alien presence in U. S. society. The study indicates, instead, that they are moving toward the majority culture. It also suggests that they are unlikely to seek a curriculum that will isolate their children from the mainstream, though, like other Americans, Hispanics will want school curricula to portray them as a group that has helped make America what it is.[11]

We need not fear, Shanker assures us, that we will not have workers with the skills necessary to maintain the nation; we need not fear that the increasing population in the U. S. of people from Latin America (I don't think we fear the few who emigrate from Spain) is going to force us to radically alter our "mainstream" culture. After all, Shanker correctly notes, the majority of Hispanics said they felt "very strong" love for the U. S. and they are "very proud" of this country. Yes, Shanker admits, there are some "individual youngsters who are not achieving [in school]," but Hispanic immigrants (and Puerto Ricans, I assume) are like earlier European immigrants: they "move up generationally." The survey he cites does not deal with this issue and Shanker cites no research evidence for this latter claim, so one wonders how he knows.[12] No matter. The important point is that Hispanics aren't really the threat they have seemed to be. Like their predecessors in the history of immigration, they will assimilate. An immigrant is an immigrant is an immigrant. The mainstream lives on! Long live the mainstream!

What Is It That Is Being Threatened?

But one wonders whether the mainstream these three authors write about is worth salvaging. It might even be argued that this rather nebulous, opaque mainstream (its specific composition and nature are more assumed than described in these writings) is culturally and politically bankrupt. For just one example, the much-hailed "end" of the Cold War that the leaders of Western governments are so proud of having caused, is really a myth for most of the inhabitants of the planet. When we look a little closer at geopolitics, we find that many of the violent conflicts, the poverty, the degradation, the exploitation and the destruction occurring around the world today are in fact echoes of the Cold War still reverberating most intensely around the globe. We find that our "mainstream" has created and supported a nation that has played a role in the production of these evils and still does. We also find that the industrialized nations around the world have been very inadequate in resolving these conflicts and curing the poverty they helped produce in the first place. It is these historical processes that have produced the flow of immigration from these parts of the world to "ours." Perhaps our "mainstream" needs more than a few generations of the new immigrants to assimilate and become like "us." If Hispanics do have these tendencies to assimilate and therefore replicate our mainstream culture, perhaps that is something to be lamented.

Why this fear of the new diversity, this need to transform it into the old diversity, or rather into a false image of that?

These fears of "the different," so carefully hidden behind the eloquent arguments of Shanker, Schlesinger and Glazer, may seem "understandable" to some people. To me they show a surprising insensitivity to the sufferings and needs of not only many of the new immigrants, but of the poor and exploited in our own society. Even more puzzling is why this fear of the new diversity, this need to transform it into the old diversity, or rather into a false

image of that? Why the fear, and why not acknowledge it?

Why Assimilation?

After all, is diversity just some sort of "social disease" we hope to get rid of? Do we really want to be all alike? How alike do we need to be? Is assimilation — whatever these writers mean by it (they never get very specific) — the only alternative to "isolation from the mainstream"? Is it not possible to maintain a certain degree of separate cultural and ethnic identity and yet be a contributing part of the whole? Actually, these authors would accept that cultural maintenance is an acceptable goal as long as it isn't carried too far. It should be kept at home; we don't want it changing our institutions and our way of life in the "mainstream."

Yes, assimilation has been a powerful force among certain groups of immigrants in our history. It has not been a road open to all, however. Moreover, among those groups who did assimilate, the operating forces were not always identical. While Schlesinger, Glazer, and Shanker lump together "European immigrants" who "became like us" in two or three generations, in fact, some European immigrants did *not* adopt "mainstream" ways so readily. Consider the German-speaking immigrants, for example.

Assimilation has not been a road open to all. . . , the operating forces were not always identical.

A European Immigrant Experience with Assimilation

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, German was the language of more than 550 publications in the United States. There were many schools, both public and private, that used both German and English as languages of instruction. Three church-centered communities of German-speaking farmers just west of Ann Arbor, Michigan were typical. Germans had first settled in the area in 1829.[13] By the time of World War I, they were still speaking German in virtually all social contexts. But when some of the German-language publications began advocating U. S. neutrality in the European war, several states and municipalities passed, and enforced, laws against the use of the German language. Journalist James Crawford, in his study of the "English Only" movement of the late twentiethth century, notes:

The anti-German xenophobia of World War I played a key role in the decline of a distinctive German ethnic tradition in U. S. society.

> Under the guise of preventing espionage, numerous communities and some states banned the use of German in public places: schools, churches, lecture halls, trains, even on the telephone. One could be fined $25 for speaking German on the streets of Findlay, Ohio. Public libraries in Chicago and Cincinnati removed German volumes from the shelves. School officials in Columbus collected German textbooks and sold them to a wastepaper company for 50 cents a hundredweight. . . . The New York Times praised South Dakota's quasi-official vigilantes, the State Council of Defense, for outlawing religious services, public speeches, and all forms of instruction in German. . . . In midwestern states alone, nearly eighteen thousand persons were charged with violating anti-German statutes and emergency decrees. Meanwhile school boards throughout the country were abolishing the study of German as a foreign language.[14]

While other factors were also involved in the decline of the German language in the U. S. — such as processes of modernization and the general shifting of economic opportunities from rural to urban areas — the anti-German xenophobia of World War I played a key role in the decline of a distinctive German ethnic tradition in U. S. society. By the 1950s, there were few monolingual German speakers in the Ann Arbor communities, for example, and many of the younger generation spoke little German.

Perhaps they would eventually have assimilated anyway, with the modernization of roads, the availability of jobs in the cities, the invasion of English-based mass media, radio and television, etc. But can we say that these German Americans chose to assimilate to an Anglo culture and language?

The Native American Experience with Assimilation

The Native American experience with assimilation complicates the picture even further. There were few among the conquered nations who wanted to become like the "whiteman,"[15] but the federal government has periodically attempted to force assimilation, usually with the expressed "humanitarian" intent of "civilizing the savages." In a report in 1868 the federal government's Indian Peace Commission recommended that "Schools should be established, which [Native American] children should be required to attend; their barbarous dialects should be blotted out and the English language substituted."[16] Thus, starting in the 1870s, a system of boarding schools was created and Native American children were removed from families and communities to be sent sometimes thousands of miles from home. Their hair was shorn, their indigenous clothing was replaced by uniforms, their languages were denied, their customs were stripped. In what might be called an early justification of the idea of a "core mainstream curriculum," J. D. C. Atkins, the U. S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, argued in 1887:

> The Indians must conform to the white man's ways, peaceably if they will, forcibly if they must. They must adjust themselves to their environment, and conform their mode of living substantially to our civilization. This civilization may not be the best possible, but it is the best the Indians can get. They can not escape it, and must either conform to it or be crushed by it.[17]

In 1868 the federal government's Indian Peace Commission recommended that "Schools should be established, which [Native American] children should be required to attend; their barbarous dialects should be blotted out and the English language substituted."

Did these Native Americans assimilate? Some did try. They became like the "whiteman" but retained a considerable anger and hostility which they sometimes took out on themselves and their own people and families. Some learned the "whiteman's" ways and managed to use them to resist the imposition of those ways on their communities, such as novelist and anthropologist Darcy McNickle, or author and legal scholar Vine Deloria.[18] But from the federal government's point of view, Native Americans were given "every opportunity" to assimilate yet often did not, or did so only partially. Certainly the results were disastrous for indigenous communities.

Who Are the Mainstream?

The picture of willing and eager assimilation that Shanker, Glazer and others portray is much simpler than they would have us believe. Distortions of the truth in an argument raise questions about the presuppositions of the argument itself. One wonders who the people are who make up the "mainstream" that these authors glorify. Is one a member of the mainstream simply by virtue of being, let's say, white? Middle class? Educated? Am I, a fourth-generation Irish American a member of the mainstream in the same way as, let's say, the chairman of General Motors or Senators Moynihan and D'Amato? Are the workers who do the work of the country and the capitalists who use or dispense with their labor all members of the mainstream? Such questions may lead one to wonder whether Shanker, Schlesinger, Glazer and the many other public voices that have been raised to further the notion of a "common culture" are not really pulling the wool over our eyes. Are they trying to get us to believe in a political and economic consensus

in this society that is modeled on "mainstream values" but is little more than a myth? Myths of this kind can readily be turned into a vindication of the inequalities in our society, but that does not seem to worry these voices quite as much.

In Favor of Diversity

Other voices have been raised to sing the praises of the new diversity. They wonder whether we can survive as a species without it. We may all agree that we do not want differences to erupt into unresolvable conflict and violence. But is sanding off our differences until we are all smooth pieces of wood with no rough surfaces, no uniquely defining cracks and fissures and knots — all ultimately indistinguishable from each other — really the way to avoid these conundrums? Do we not need diversity, in fact, simply to survive as humans?

"Multiculturalism . . . wants to study border situations . . . because understanding them may bring with it a little hope for the world."

Rather than seeking to reduce everyone to a common denominator, or hold "mainstream" values over the heads of those who do not belong to that mainstream, these voices want to enrich our culture by expanding our sense of possibility. Henry Louis Gates, Jr.:

> We need to reform our entire notion of core curricula to account for the comparable eloquence of the African, the Asian, the Latin American, and the Middle Eastern traditions, to prepare our students for their roles in the twenty-first century as citizens of a world culture, educated through a truly human notion of the humanities.[19]

There is a kind of ecological argument behind this way of thinking. Interestingly, the term "culture" derives from the concept of cultivating the soil. Australian journalist, Robert Hughes, author of *The Culture of Complaint* — largely a diatribe against "political correctnes " — expands the evolutionary metaphor in his argument that, without diversity, the human species will not thrive:

> In society as in farming, monoculture works poorly. It exhausts the soil. The social richness of America, so striking to the foreigner, comes from the diversity of its tribes.

Hughes suggests we need to learn from diversity:

> Multiculturalism asserts that people with different roots can co-exist, that they can learn to read the image-banks of others, that they can and should look across the frontiers of race, language, gender and age without prejudice or illusion, and learn to think against the background of a hybridized society. It proposes — modestly enough — that some of the most interesting things in history and culture happen at the interface between cultures. It wants to study border situations, not only because they are fascinating in themselves, but because understanding them may bring with it a little hope for the world.[20]

Hughes does not examine what we might learn by studying border situations, but his point is nevertheless an important one worth returning to. Unlike other living species, human evolution took a radical adaptive step when it began to rely more on tool use and communication than on the individual's physical prowess. Our evolution — including the occupation of every ecological niche on the globe, as well as the creation of new ecological environments — has been profoundly cultural. Cultural diversity has made the species into the dominant force on earth. Anthropological research attests that diversity — particularly the division of labor and the evolution of complex systems of social organization, communication, and culture — has made possible the expansion of the species *Homo Sapiens Sapiens* from its rather humble beginnings on the African continent to every corner of the globe. In evolutionary terms it cannot be denied that the species has been "successful" to date. To that extent, the species itself has been long dependent on its cultural diversity.

At the same time, it is also obvious that cultural and other differences may play

significant roles in conflicts between different subgroups within the species. The fears of Schlesinger, Glazer and Shankar that diversity may lead to disunity and conflict may have some basis in reality. Certainly we do see many instances around the world where cultural, physical, and other differences are cited by combatants as "reasons" for trying to destroy their opponents. But whether cultural, ethnic and other differences "cause" conflict, or whether they are exploited by the unscrupulous to mobilize groups against one another in their own quest for power, are questions worth keeping in mind.

Some have trepidations about our emerging patterns of diversity, while others accept and even celebrate them. (Augustus Trowbridge, Director of Manhattan Country School, offers an eloquent argument in favor of a pluralistic vision of society that can be found in his essay included in the boxes on this and succeeding pages.) But what effect do such differing views have when their spotlights are turned on the question of school curricula? In the next section, I consider the implications that some of these arguments have for designing a multicultural curriculum.

2. Designing a Multicultural Curriculum

Cultural Literacy

As we saw earlier, prominent writers have expressed serious reservations about a multicultural curriculum. While Schlesinger, Glazer and Shankar accept the need for some form of a multicultural curriculum, they do not want it to take precedence over teaching "basic values." Such a curriculum would acknowledge the differences children bring to our schools, but it would not make those differences the "core" of any curriculum.

The first example may be seen as a "response" to these feelings, though in fact work on this curriculum antedates the writings of Schlesinger, Glazer and

The Case for Multiculturalism

Gus Trowbridge

On our penny — ironically now nearly obsolete — appears the most precious Latin motto associated with the American Dream: "E Pluribus Unum" — "From many, one." Today's national debate over multiculturalism centers on this paradoxical notion of unity within diversity and challenges America's capacity to maintain the delicate balance necessary to uphold its dream.

Opponents define multiculturalism as "replacing assimilation by fragmentation, integration by separatism. It belittles 'unum' and glorifies 'pluribus'" (Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Disuniting of America, 1992).

Proponents of multiculturalism embrace the paradox of the pluribus-unum model, asserting that unless there is more inclusiveness, the oneness of the American Dream will remain deferred for groups who have been historically excluded.

On one level the debate over multiculturalism is about "How much 'pluribus' and how much 'unum'?" On a more adversarial level lies the real point of controversy: the ownership of America.

The titles of two recent educational conferences on multiculturalism are transparent in this re-

gard. One reads, "Managing Diversity", the other, "Black and Latino Students in Independent Schools: How Are They Faring?" Both conferences expose the racist presumption that diversity is acceptable providing it is under the control of the dominant culture. Why ask, "How are they faring?" Why not ask, "How are we faring?" A truly multicultural perspective does not entertain a "we-they" viewpoint.

The American Dream invites all people to the table. The failure of its realization has been that those controlling society have assumed America is their table. Like Orwell's pigs, who say, "All pigs are equal, but some are more equal than others," the establishment has never set the table of the American Dream with sufficient places for all. Those opposed to multiculturalism are afraid of a table to which there may be uninvited guests. Their fear is not fragmentation; it is loss of control.

Multiculturalism excludes no one. It recognizes that all who are at table are equally eligible and equally obligated to share the fruits of America's dream with due respect for their differences and with determination to maintain their partnership.

Multiculturalists have rejected the concept of the "melting pot" in favor of diversity, creating other more positive, inclusive images such as a "rainbow coalition" and a "beautiful mosaic." For this they are called "ethnic ideologues" and accused of disuniting America.

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., once the "Dean" of liberalism, blames the multicultural movement for more damage than it surely deserves.

Ethnic ideologues, he says in the closing tirade of his just published book, The Disuniting of America,

> have set themselves against the old American ideal of assimilation. They call on the republic to think in terms not of individual but of group identity and to move the polity from individual rights to group rights. They have made a certain progress in transforming the United States into a more segregated society. They have done their best to turn a college generation against Europe and Western tradition. They have imposed ethnocentric, Afrocentric and bilingual curricula on public schools, well designed to hold minority children out of American society. They have told young people from minority groups that the Western democratic tradition is not for them. They have encouraged minorities to see themselves as victims and to live by alibis rather than to claim the opportunities opened for them by the potent combination of black protest and white guilt. They have filled the air with recrimination and rancor and have remarkably advanced the fragmentation of American life.

Mr. Schlesinger has sorely misjudged those favoring a

more pluralistic American culture and polity, and in citing the sufficiency of black protest and white guilt, he reveals a blindness of his perception. I wonder if he is capable of understanding why blacks not only protest their prolonged opression but also dream of their equality, unhampered by those who say they have had enough. I wonder, too, by what criteria does he determine we had enough of white guilt. Finally, I wonder if Mr. Schlesinger can conceive of whites who, despite their historical guilt, refuse to be culpable in restraining the inclusion of their fellow humankind at the table of the American Dream.

Multiculturalists rest their case, not only on diversity and ethnicity for their own sakes. Their belief in the "unum" transcends, though does not diminsish, their advocacy of pluralism. To the multiculturalist, the unum of America is the natural right of each and all of its citizenry to equality and justice. In granting these inalienable rights to all, America may never fear that its people or culture will be ununified.

Manhattan Country School,
April, 1992

Shankar discussed above. It really less a proposal for a multicultural curriculum than the invention and selling of an alternative. This is the "Cultural Literacy" movement, brainchild of English Professor E. D. Hirsch. This program is worth looking at, not only because of its widespread and apparently growing influence on schools across the country, but also because it represents or reflects, to my mind at least, a significant cultural strain in U. S. society. If there is any such thing as an "American cultural phenomenon," the writings of the "Cultural Literacy" authors must surely be that.

Professor Hirsch and his associates have formed the "Cultural Literacy Network" of "hundreds of teachers, school administrators, and parents" and have produced a series of texts for the primary grades, including *A First Dictionary of Cultural Literacy,* which they believe serves as a basis for insuring that the children of the U. S. share a "common core of knowledge."[21] The *First Dictionary* divides this common core into various categories such as "Proverbs," "Idioms," "Mythology," "The Bible," American History to 1865," World History Since 1600," "Politics and Economics," etc. The diversity of the world's societies is not completely excluded. For example, in the category "Religion and Philosophy," we find dictionary entries for "Allah" as well as "Aristotle," for "Catholicism" as well as "Islam," for "Christmas" as well as "Yom Kippur." Yet at the same time, we notice a certain bias toward certain ways of thinking about the world and its history that many would say is "Eurocentric." For example, in the chapter "American History to 1865," the entry under "1492" reads as follows:

> In 1492, the Italian explorer Christopher Columbus, discovered the American continents.[22]

Aside from the fact that Columbus never reached the American continents, or at least the mainlands, the use of the word "discover" clearly reflects a European perspective as opposed to the perspective of the indigenous peoples already inhabiting

those continents. Similarly, under the category "Iroquois League," we find the following entry:

> The Iroquois were an alliance of five (eventually six) American Indian peoples who were warriors and fur traders in northern New York State.[23]

While it is true that the Iroquois were "warriors and fur traders" at one point in their history, the sentence leaves out much that is important about this period. In fact, the Iroquois were effectively incorporated into the European fur trade by necessity. As European fur traders moved through the northern reaches of what is now the U. S., they destroyed the ecological balance upon which the Iroquois depended for their subsistence. The Iroquois had little choice but to become suppliers of furs to Europeans. As fur animals were depleted, the Iroquois moved westward. This brought them into competition and conflict with the Huron, who were also involved in the fur trade, largely through French traders. The resulting wars eventually destroyed the Huron as a separate, identifiable people.[24]

All children come to school with a vast store of linguistic and cultural knowledge. We should help them develop this knowledge, not force them to set it aside in the name of acquiring "mainstream" culture.

What is the philosophical argument supporting this approach to education? Where does this program lead our children? Hirsch argues that there has been too much emphasis on "skills" in our schools, and not enough on the basic set of facts all children must learn in order to become "literate." He even suggests:

> Our schools' emphasis on skills rather than knowledge has also had the unintended effect of injuring disadvantaged students more than advantaged ones. Since most so-called skills are really based upon specific knowledge, those who have already received literate knowledge from their homes are better able to understand what teachers and textbooks are saying and are therefore better able to learn new things than are children from nonliterate backgrounds.[25]

This is one way to address the inequalities in our schools; however, one can imagine other ways. Rather than insist that children who come from these "nonliterate backgrounds" be confronted by teachers and textbooks who use terms and express information that are unfamiliar to them, why not simply rewrite the textbooks and retrain the teachers so that they can talk to these children? Why do the "illiterate" have to adapt to the "literate" and not vice versa? Of course, the terms "illiterate" and "literate" really have less to do with literacy than with cultural differences, as well as with differences in social class. "Literacy" is relative; there are many kinds of literacy, and it would be better to speak of "literacies" with a small "l" rather than "Literacy" with the upper-case letter.

We know that all children come to school with a vast store of knowledge. Just the ability to speak a language involves the accumulation of an extensive vocabulary and the sorting out of a complex set of grammatical rules that all normal children have accomplished by the age of five. In addition, they have also absorbed a considerable amount of cultural knowledge from their immediate families and associates. The languages or dialects they speak, as well as the cultural ways they have already learned to live by, may well be different from "eighty percent of the knowledge" that Hirsch claims is "commonly shared by literate Americans." But is there any reason to treat that difference as "illiterate," as if it were a handicap in and of itself? It can, obviously, be a handicap in "postindustrial" societies like the United States (though not in every social circle), but that is the result of certain classes of people, certain political and economic forces which dominate the running of that society.[26]

Hirsch wants to build a "common core" curriculum ensuring that all children share the same "cultural set." In fact, cultures

are not mere collections of facts; nor is it even possible to produce a list of facts that does not highlight, and, by implication, support one social group over another. As our two examples of entries from his *First Dictionary* show, the way one talks about the facts — even in definitions — has implications for how one is to view them.

More importantly, the definitions necessarily imply a perspective on the relationships between the facts, or rather between the different peoples who produced the history, politics, religions, proverbs, myths, etc. that form the categories of the "common core of knowledge." Not to make these relationships clear in the definitions themselves, or in at least a separate introductory essay, is to conceal them. They need to be acknowledged and kept in mind, even when writing texts for very young children.[27] The program of "cultural literacy" ends by reifying the dominance of "mainstream" cultures over those of the "disadvantaged," "nonliterate" peoples of our society.

This bias becomes clear when Hirsch presents a rather subtle and complicated argument for his program of "cultural literacy":

> . . . a mastery of national culture is essential to mastery of the standard language in every modern nation. This point is important for educational policy, because educators often stress the virtues of multicultural education. Such study is indeed valuable in itself; it inculcates tolerance and provides a perspective on our own traditions and values. But however laudable it is, it should not be the primary focus of national education. It should not be allowed to supplant or interfere with our schools' responsibility to ensure our children's mastery of American literate culture.[28]

In order to accept these arguments, one must accept certain presuppositions that are usually not questioned or even acknowledged by these authors. For example, while it may or may not be true that "a mastery of national culture is essential to mastery of the standard language in every modern nation," one ought to take more than a glance at the concepts behind the terms "standard language" and "national culture." The term "standard language" may seem innocuous and culturally neutral, yet it is an ambiguous term and it is not clear what Hirsch means by it. Is it simply the language spoken by the majority in a particular polity? Is it the language of the mass media and mass communications? Is that all a standard language is? Simply what "most people" or "mainstream people" use?

But when we talk about "English" in this country, what do we mean? There are many dialects of English, and although they are generally mutually intelligible, they hardly have the same status. Black English, or African-American English, has features quite different from the English spoken by, for example, a Jim Lehrer of the *McNeil-Lehrer News Hour* on public television, of a George Bush, or of a Bill Clinton. The dialects of these three men are rather different on the level of the sounds of language, the pronunciation of particular words and syllables; yet their status is equal and they may all be said to speak the language of prestige and high status in America. But Black English, different not only in pronunciation but to a limited extent in its grammar and even more so in its vocabulary, does not have the same status as these languages. In fact, there is no scientifically linguistic argument about the structure of this dialect, or about mutual intelligibility, that could possibly justify the lower social status in "mainstream" discourse of Black English. Black English has less prestige because it is spoken by African Americans, not because of its internal properties as a dialect.[29]

Which brings us to Hirsch's other term, "national culture." We might agree that there is some intimate connection between one's culture and one's language; after all, our culture is learned through our communication with the world, through our interactions with other people around us — in other words, through language. But it is not clear what Hirsch means by "culture"

or to what aspects of human culture he is pointing. Is he talking about culture as some anthropologists do — as a set of lenses through which we come to see the world as we grow up into particular societies? Is culture a set of beliefs and values, is it a description of the world, is it a set of instructions for how to "be" Mexican, or Irish, or Navajo or American?

For Hirsch, culture seems to be a list of factual knowledge, a set of "cultural definitions" of terms grouped into categories. There is nothing here about process; yet we know cultural processes are important because they involve particular social groups adapting to changing conditions — and conditions are always changing, now that humans have acquired the technology to dominate the earth. It is common folk wisdom among many Puerto Ricans that those who migrated to New York have changed in many ways. They are different from those who have remained on the Island, and Islanders often think the changes have been for the worse. It is true that there are cultural differences — and linguistic differences which reflect and help maintain cultural differences — between the two groups. But those changes are not *ipso facto* a process of "decadence," as some Puerto Rican authors have claimed.[30] Rather, they are cultural adaptations to a new environment that not only has enabled the Puerto Rican community to survive as an ethnic community within the City, but has allowed it to maintain specific connections with a rural past on the Island that many have never known firsthand.

Assimilation is still alive and well in Hirsch's program, despite his denials.

Processes of adaptation and change imply the importance of relationships. Cultural change means changing relationships. Cultural change can be a response to changes in social, political or economic conditions. In an urbanized and suburbanized America, we live today very different lives than the predominantly rural population of the nineteenth century. We are, for example, more individualistic, and more oriented to networks of nuclear families and peers than to extended families and kin. We, as a nation, are more consumer-oriented as well.

There is little discussion of such processes in Hirsch's "Cultural Literacy" program. Relationships are not made explicit, yet they remain behind and between the definitions of terms, like a tangled web of nerves beneath the skin.

What is the goal of "Cultural Literacy" then? I think we see an unstated goal, a kind of "subtext," in the way Hirsch connects literacy and culture with English in the passage cited above from his book *Cultural Literacy*. I believe that Hirsch wants to ride the long historical wave of the dominance of particular dialects of English in this country — and of the dominance of their concomitant cultures — to foster a particular brand of nationalism, which he misleadingly labels "American literate culture." In fact, it is questionable whether most "literate Americans" do share the factual knowledge Hirsch is promoting. But even if they do, there is no assurance that shared factual knowledge of this kind represents anything else that is shared. What Hirsch's "Cultural Literacy" program is really aiming for is to create a consensus based on certain ideas of what constitutes a "mainstream" whose reality is itself questionable. For "mainstream," perhaps we should read "the culture of the dominant group." Assimilation is still alive and well in Hirsch's program, despite his denials.

Afrocentrism

At a seemingly opposite pole from the "Cultural Literacy" supporters, are those who advocate taking a particular ethnic or racial group and making its history and culture the center of the curriculum. The most prominent of these, at least in terms of the attention given to it in public discourse, is Afrocentrism.

One of the central tenets of an Afrocentric curriculum is that African-American children need to see exemplary models of

people like themselves who have succeeded in overcoming racism in this or other societies. African-American children need to know that the history of their people is as extensive, honorable and full of accomplishment as that of European-Americans. They need to learn that the pharaohs of Egypt were really black, or that Athena — often portrayed as the exemplary white Greek goddess in traditional textbooks — was really black, or that Africa was made up of great civilized kingdoms before Europeans invaded the continent. African-American children need to understand that there have been many great black leaders in the world's societies, including American society. They need to see that black people can become doctors, lawyers, business leaders, politicians, etc. An Afrocentric curriculum gives black children models of the beauty, creativity, determination, and power of black people, and through that, the self-esteem of black children will be enhanced. Professor Leonard Jeffries expresses this view in a review of New York State's social studies curriculum:

> The wholesale policy of destroying the positive aspects and attributes of African Americans runs deep in the intellectual and academic tradition of America. This practice must be reversed so that the heroic struggle for equality waged by African Americans can be an inspiration to us all.[31]

This is not the place to spread out the entire patchwork quilt of the Afrocentric argument in our discourses on curriculum reform. However, Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s critique of Afrocentrism is worth consideration. Gates argues that a concern for the self-esteem of young black people is at the core of the Afrocentric curriculum movement. Gates believes this emphasis arises out of two false assumptions. First, the assumption that black and other adolescents of color are "lacking" in self-esteem lacks a foundation. Second, the assumption is false that "self-esteem" can be enhanced through "education," resulting therefore in the economic success of the bearer of that "self-love" over time. Gates states:

> The trick of Afrocentrism is to have supplanted real politics with a kind of group therapy. It seeks to redress the problem of poor self-esteem rather than the problem of poor life chances. . . . Afrocentric education is presented as a technique of social control, one that will contain what white America fears most — black violence.[32]

This is a severe criticism. To the extent that any curriculum is aimed primarily at "raising the self-esteem" of any particular group of young people to the neglect of the study of the real politics and economics of that are the underpinning of an unequal society, it must be rejected. Gates believes such an approach actually feeds into the power structures already moving African Americans around like pawns to be used or sacrificed, whatever suits the moment. Afrocentrism turns blacks away from the community toward the self:

> Exposed to the proper educational regimen, we will be able to ground ourselves by getting in touch with — well, our Inner African. Afrocentrism of this sort is anything but militant; and, in its redemptive trajectory, its blithe ahistoricism, its weakness for the quick fix, it is profoundly American. Martin and Malcolm, prophetic and doomy, have been replaced by a bustle of black Buscaglias. Just as you'd think, it's love — in particular, self-love — that makes the world go round.[33]

Gates does not confine his remarks to a critique of Afrocentric curricula; he goes on to generalize about an apparently wide range of cultural studies programs:

> This fixation on self-esteem — the explicit goal of many "multicultural" initiatives in the public schools — is another way in which pop psychology has informed recent social and cultural movements.[34]

Gates believes many of the curriculum reforms that have recently entered classrooms under the cloak of "multiculturalism" are really ways of playing "identity politics" with children's and young people's lives:

> The real battle to rescue some reasonable and healthy form of multiculturalism isn't with psychology; it's with "identity politics"

— a new label for the age-old phenomenon of mobilizing political allegiances around collective identities. If the rhetoric of multiculturalism has reached something of an impasse, it's because it has become so embroiled with this thing called identity politics that few observers are able to disentangle the two.[35]

Afrocentrism, or any other form of ethnocentric approach to curriculum reform, will not be able to untie these knots, Gates thinks. Because of its basic assumptions about "self-esteem," this approach must define its subject in advance as positive, even pure, devoid of contradictions and error. Yet this does not answer to the reality of the diverse cultures of the world, nor does it help the student see that reality in the clear light of day:

> What's needed is a version of multiculturalism that asks not for a favorable judgment ahead of time but simply for a fair hearing. And part of taking other cultures — like other people — seriously is being able to disagree with them.[36]

Gates suggestively concludes his argument by pointing to the important influence of the "culture of the marketplace":

> The truth is that what both unifies and divides America is less the wisdom of John Locke, or Alain Locke, than the culture of the marketplace. It's MTV more than Montaigne, Viacom more than Voltaire. Those who worry that the future of Western civilization lies in the balance of John Locke with Frantz Fanon in Stanford's core curriculum are almost fetchingly off target: they'd be closer if they trained their eyes on the growth of the mass media.[37]

A study of the complex relationships between young people — whether African Americans or others — and the cultural discourses of the mass media with which they live their daily lives would be very much to the point in the design of a multicultural curriculum. With its large audience of the young, the mass media has a powerful influence on their perception of the world. That influence can be both positive and negative. It brings information from around the globe to one's living room; but we cannot forget it is part of the network of the world of giant corporations which rule much of the world in their own and their stockholders' interests, not in the interests of African Americans or any other group that has suffered oppression.

If Gates is right, an Afro- or ethnocentric curriculum cannot answer the need for our teachers to understand more completely the complex and often contradictory cultural influences on the minds of young people. Nor can it help young people develop their own understandings of those influences with which they grow to adulthood.

"A Curriculum of Inclusion" and "One Nation, Many Peoples"

We do not, in fact, find in the multicultural curricula developed by state and local government agencies an ability to take account of the cultural influence of the "culture of the marketplace." It might even be said that, from Gates' point of view, many of the curricula developed in recent years, such as those already mentioned in the Prologue in connection with California and New York State, are a bit behind the times. Perhaps they have answered the demands of people of color to be "included," but they have not said much about how the cultural traditions of particular communities interface with the powerful cultural influences of the corporate world. And how well have they fared when it comes to including the variety of peoples we see around us today? In what ways are diverse peoples to be "included"? Is "inclusion" really the issue?

In this and the next section, I look briefly at two different sets of New York State guidelines for a multicultural social studies curriculum, as expressed in reports issued by two separate committees of scholars and experts appointed by Thomas Sobel, the Commissioner of Education for New York State. Although the two reports were not presented by Sobel as conflicting, in fact the second was largely perceived at the time as an "answer," or even a "correction" to the first report. They appear, on

the surface at least, to represent two opposing poles of an argument about the question of "inclusion" in the curriculum. But the argument itself may be ill-conceived, though it continues to have force in our public discourse on education today. For these reasons, a comparison of the two is instructive.

"A Curriculum of Inclusion"

(1) Self-Esteem, Tolerance and a Round Table

This 118-page document was issued in July 1989 by the seventeen-member Task Force on Minorities: Equity and Excellence "to determine the status of the school curriculum in all subjects and whether it is serving the goal of the Regents to provide sound education in a pluralistic society."[38] As already noted, this report was subjected to considerable criticism. It is an ambiguous document consisting of several separately authored sections. Dr. Harry Hamilton, Chair of the Department of Atmospheric Sciences at the State University of New York, Albany is cited as "principal author" with the assistance[39] in the initial stages of the writing" by Dr. Leonard Jeffries who was at the time, Chair of the Department of African-American Studies at the City College of New York. Appended to the main body of the report are appendices which include four reports separately written by consultants who were each asked to review curriculum from the perspective of one of four "cultural" groups: African American, Asian American, Latino, and Native American.[40] These appendices sometimes present a rather different view of the curriculum than the main body of the report.

The authors of the "Curriculum of Inclusion" found that a "European American monocultural perspective prevails" in the social studies curricula of New York State's schools.

The theme of "self-esteem" undulates throughout the text, surfacing and submerging at regular intervals like a dolphin cutting through the waves. In the very first paragraph, we are told that "negative characterizations or the absence of positive references have a terribly damaging effect on the psyche of young people of African, Asian, Latino, and Native American descent."[41] The Task Force argues:

> ...all curricular materials be prepared on the basis of multicultural contributions to the development of all aspects of our society. Such a balanced, integrated approach is seen as serving the interests of all children from all cultures: children from Native American, Puerto Rican/Latino, Asian American, and African American cultures will have higher self-esteem and self-respect, while children from European cultures will have a less arrogant perspective of being part of the group that has "done it all."[42]

The authors speak of "negative stereotyping" and "intellectual victimization." They want "the educational system [to] encourage the development of positive self-esteem and self-management skills."[43] The "curriculum . . . must help each child . . . learn knowledge, skills, and attitudes which enable development of self-esteem. . . ."[44] The authors argue that "when some people in a society become invisible, the excluded people de-value their self-worth and the included people over-value their self-worth."[45] And they further state: "Instead of the learning process 'turning students on', it produces the opposite effect, fostering low self-esteem and negative expectations."[46]

The main body of the report summarizes the curriculum reviews of the four consultants, highlighting the "under representation" of non-European-origin peoples in current school curricula. They find that

> the European American monocultural perspective prevails. Its value system and norms dominate, while the contributions of African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Puerto Rican/Latinos and their experiences are extremely ambiguous and marginalized. Very few individuals other than European Americans emerge from the outlines and assume a

> meaningful place in history. Rarely is one of the basic themes truly related to the multicultural American experience.[47]

"A new frame of reference is needed," the Task Force report asserts:

> through which students and teachers both can effectively analyze the major events and issues concerning human development. An educational system centered around the Eurocentric world view is limited and narrow and fails to provide a global perspective. . . . Simultaneously, the Eurocentric world view perpetuates processes of negative socialization for African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos and Native Americans.[48]

As opposed to this, the Task Force advocates including issues important to non-European ethnic and cultural groups. They cite a published statement by the New York State Board of Regents which they support:

> Each student will develop the ability to understand, respect, and accept people of different races; sex; cultural heritage; national origin; religion; and political, economic, and social background, and their values, beliefs, and attitudes.[49]

"The Eurocentric world view perpetuates processes of negative socialization for African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos and Native Americans."

Borrowing the metaphor of people sitting together at a table for a meal, the authors suggest that, to date, the "table" has "placed European culture at the head of a long, narrow table; at best, some other cultures are treated as invited guests sitting some distance from the head of the table; at worst, some cultures are not even invited to the table." An alternative model is found in the legendary King Arthur's Round Table: "when all gathered, they sat in relative equality of opportunity to serve and show respect for each other."[50]

The Task Force report makes few specific recommendations to the Commissioner for designing a new, more inclusive curriculum. Of their nine recommendations, the fourth is characteristic:

> That the Commissioner lead his staff to understand that the adequate, accurate presentation of multicultural diversity within curricular materials requires that the history, achievements, aspirations, and concerns of people of all cultures be equitably and accurately infused into and made an integral part of all curricula.[51]

This is not the place to review all four of the appended reports on the "cultural groups" selected by the Task Force; however, it is interesting that at times, these appendices use language that paints a rather different picture, using colors some would see as a bit more garish than those of the main body of the report. For example, the African American reviewwritten by Dr. Leonard Jeffries talks about "the spillover of racism in the American education system," and about how "the curricula in the education systems reflect these deep-seated pathologies of racial hatred. Any action to root out this illness," he continues, "must be proactive and substantial in view of the generations of indoctrination and the strength of the processes of institutionalization."[52]

Dr. Jeffries also emphasizes the importance of enhancing the self-esteem of young African Americans: "African-American youth, because of ego starvation and negative socialization processing, have special needs that can be met by positive images and cultural experiences."[53] He notes the "limited capability" of teachers and administrators to incorporate new knowledge of history into traditional curricula: "Educators and scholars often turn away from the controversial new dimensions of truth or broader vision and retreat to outdated information, erroneous conclusion and often false and Eurocentric racists [sic] theories and judgments."[54] As an example of what the new curriculum should do, he suggests that "students rewrite all or part of the Declaration of Independence in their own words and consider such issues as to whether the document is a state-

ment of ideals or a list of grievances, and to what extent have these ideals been achieved."[55] Dr. Jeffries further states "the constitution of 1789 was a seriously flawed document. . . . It was the embodiment of the White Male with Property Model."[56] He accuses the powerful who have controlled United States policies of "sacrificing higher ideals on the alter [sic] of materialism and profit making, particularly when African-American interests are involved."[57]

We've already seen Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s argument against "multicultural" curricula based on the misguided notion of "self-esteem," and the at least questionable assumption that young African Americans "lack" it. To the extent that "A Curriculum of Inclusion" is such a curriculum, at least in outline and emphasis, it should be able to answer this critique. However, the assertions about self-esteem that have been cited above are never questioned in the report. Are they valid assertions? What is their basis? Is there a scientific basis for saying that black youth and children are lacking in self-esteem? These questions are not raised. And it is not our charge here to answer them either. We need only note that reputable scholars continue to debate these issues. Whether or not the lack of self-esteem is the main problem confronting African-American children and youth, will presenting "positive" images be sufficient to counter that deep-seated attitude of self-doubt of the colonized? This is to attack the symptom, not the cause.

Interestingly, Dr. Jeffries begins his own appended report on African-American children and the curriculum with several bows to the notion of self-respect. He too cites the Regents' statement that "Each student will earn knowledge, skills and attitudes which enable development of self-esteem." He says these statements provide a framework for "development of revised curricular materials." The theme of self-esteem comes up for air throughout his 29-page discussion: "This unique opportunity to include a truly significant historical experience that would improve the self-esteem of African Americans . . . ." And: "These types of monographs help to improve self-esteem of neglected and defamed groups such as African-American [sic] and instill multiculturalism in others."[58] At the same time, Dr. Jeffries also embraces the Regents' goal of teaching tolerance and understanding. He wants a curriculum that will develop:

> [an] open-minded student who has an appreciation and personalization of the flow of human history and is able to listen to, and read about, widely divergent points of view without making snap judgments. As a result, the student will be able to recognize and understand racial, religious, ethnic cultural, regional and national differences without prejudice, bigotry or malice.[59]

All the authors of the report, of both its main body and the appendices, emphasize this theme as well. Curiously, Dr. Jeffries' report is replete with instructions to teach young black people:

> [about] the conflict, chaos, and war which characterized Europe after the Crusades and corruption of the Roman Catholic Church. This situation in Europe contributed directly to the development of negative values and policies that produced aggressive individuals and nations that were read to "discover, invade and conquer" foreign land because of greed, racism and national egoism.[60]

He finds that current social studies and related curricula do discuss "slavery and the enslaved, but you can neither taste it or feel it. The moral outrage over the 'peculiar institution' is successfully covered over by the flow of historical events."[61]

Some might fear that these recommendations to show young black people the truths about slavery and the subjugation, degradation, and enslavement of their African ancestors might cause further loss of self-esteem. Dr. Jeffries' answers that showing young people the full darkness of the evils of slavery will enable them to better appreciate "the heroic struggle for equality waged by African-Americans [which] can be an inspiration to all."[62]

(2) Some Theoretical and Practical Weaknesses of the Report

Gates' argument still prevails. But there is another issue I would like to raise regarding the inadequacies of "A Curriculum of Inclusion." While one cannot but embrace any program that includes on a basis of true equality all the peoples of our history as well as of the world, there is inadequate discussion of the frames of interpretation that are to be applied to the greater human diversity that will be reflected in a new curriculum. Strangely, for a report that proposes critique and guidelines for a *multicultural* curriculum, there is little discussion of the "cultural" part of this term. What does "culture" mean? What kind of social entities are we talking about when we talk about "different cultures"? The authors of the report use the term "cultural groups," which implies a range of separate entities, as does the metaphor of King Arthur's Round Table mentioned above. Are "cultures" identical to "ethnic groups"? The report tends to conflate the two terms. They speak of the "seventeen persons, representing all cultural groups described in this report," and we have already seen that these "cultural groups" have names: African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Puerto Ricans/Latinos.

Some of the four consultants whose reports are found in the appendix acknowledge that not all members of the identified "cultural groups" are alike or can be said to share exactly the same cultural heritages. Yet Gates other admonition — that in fact the "real" culture of young people today is that of the marketplace — bears consideration here. Young people of all the groups mentioned by the authors are often profound consumers of "popular" culture, a culture that has not been produced by their own ethnic communities, but rather is the work of an economic structure that depends on creating "needs" in people to buy the products of a market, consumer-oriented, economy.

This "marketplace culture" is very different from the kind of thing we mean when we talk about Latino, Asian-American, African-American, Native-American "cultures." Traditional cultures are "designed" (or rather, historically evolve) to protect the community, maintaining groups of people in some sort of cooperative affinity over the generations. One may be, let's say, ethnically — by parentage — a Puerto Rican, but this tells us nothing about one's "culture" or the cultures one has participated in. Some Puerto Ricans have become more "modernized" than others through their exposure to the marketplace, both as laborers and as consumers.[63] In addition, there are considerable cross influences between some of these ethnic groups, particularly between African Americans and many Latinos. As a result, people who can be identified from one point of view as "members" of a particular ethnic or "racial" group do not always share the same values, the same beliefs, the same goals, or even the same ways of speaking and using language.[64]

The equation of culture and ethnicity is one indication of a lack of theoretical orientation of the report's authors. No theory of history is set before us, and hence no way to interpret specific critiques of existing curricula or proposals for revisions, other than to measure the curriculum with a scale: to what extent are non-European groups included in the story? No concept of culture is presented either. The kinds of cultural complexities we have barely touched on here are not addressed by the authors. Nor are any fundamental principles of pedagogy presented, other than the unexamined assumptions regarding "self-esteem" we discussed above. There are no guidelines that would raise for curriculum developers and teachers the kinds of questions about "traditional" and "marketplace" cultures we have raised here; yet the interaction of these different cultural forces really involves a struggle for the minds of all young people today.

Some differences cannot be accepted across cultural boundaries with equanimity.

Not only do the authors fail to raise such fundamental questions, but they underestimate the kinds of "differences" existing in the world today — differences that in fact split the very "cultural groups" they want to include. It is clear that some differences cannot be accepted across cultural boundaries with equanimity. For example, many authors have criticized the treatment of women by African-American males.[65] Gender relations may not cross over cultural borders so easily. (Interestingly, Dr. Jeffries mentions African-American women only once in his 29-page report). Other differences, too, need to be weighed and critiqued for their value and validity, not unquestioningly accepted or "tolerated" which is ultimately little more than condescension.

A lack of a theoretical orientation to culture and history is also reflected in the authors' neglect of a very basic concept regarding human differences: the *relationships* that obtain between differences — as well as between different kinds of difference (i.e., ethnicity, culture, gender, etc.) — are what should be most basic to any analysis of those differences, to any understanding of them that is to evolve out of serious study. Relationships between ethnic groups, for instance, are obviously important for students to learn about, study, analyze, critique and evaluate. Relationships between, for example, Puerto Ricans and African Americans in New York City are important to understand. There are mutual borrowings of cultural practices and ways of speaking. There also exist some hostilities, some potential conflicts, some competition as well as cooperation. In certain instances, it is easy to see these crosscultural influences; in others, it is difficult to say whether these cultural practices and ways of talking are African-American or Puerto Rican in their source. (It should also be remembered that Puerto Rican culture has had a historically extensive infusion of African culture which is still very viable today.) Cultural transformations occur, improvisations on borrowed ways are elaborated, and something new is sometimes produced.

A lack of a theoretical orientation to culture and history is also reflected in the authors' neglect of a very basic concept regarding human differences: the* relationships *that obtain between differences.

These relationships between identifiable ethnic groups (not "cultural groups") really cannot be understood without understanding "broader" or more "global" relationships. For example, while both African Americans and Puerto Ricans include large sectors of working-class people, they have had different roles in the labor markets and the movements of capital in the U. S. and around the world over the past several centuries. They have come into contact with different peoples, they have had different destinies in their separate but related histories. Such relationships help us understand what those differences mean to the people who subscribe to them or who, because they were born into a certain community, simply *are* those differences.

Whatever we include in a multicultural curriculum, should we not begin with questions about relationships, rather than with cries of "Include me! Include me!"? Given the number of respected scholars on the Task Force on Minorities: Excellence and Equity, one might have expected that at least this question of priority would be raised. It is not obvious that "inclusion" is really the most basic issue, since so much more is needed. Even if everyone is seated equally around a round table, we still need to examine what the purposes of the "meeting" are to be. Are we talking about "equal access" to the nation's resources, to job markets, to knowledge? If so, what is our purpose here? Is it simply to ensure that everyone can compete on a level playing field for those resources, or do we need to go beyond equal access to something more profound? The failure of the report to leave some theoretical guidelines for the further development of a multicultural curriculum may have left

State Board of Education people floundering; it may have contributed to what amounted to a de facto rejection of the report by Sobel.

"One Nation, Many Peoples"

There was some vociferous criticism of "A Curriculum of Inclusion" — particularly of its language, such as that found in some of the passages cited above from Dr. Jeffries' appended report. One result was the formation of a new group by Commissioner Sobel, the "Social Studies Review and Development Committee," consisting of "some 24 eminent scholars and teachers in the social sciences and history from academe and the schools, representing a variety of viewpoints and racial/ethnic groups." These included Diane Ravitch, formerly of the Reagan administration, Nathan Glazer, a Harvard sociologist, and Arthur Schlesinger, a professor of history at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. This committee issued a new report in June 1991, titled "One Nation, Many Peoples."

It is worth noting a new emphasis in the second report. This new focus is highlighted by Sobel in a memo of July 12, 1991 to the New York State Board of Regents.[66] In this memo Sobel repeatedly emphasizes the concept that we are "one nation." He opens the memo with a question: "To what extent, if any, should the children of New York State be taught a social studies curriculum which is more 'multicultural' than that now in existence?" This question, he notes, "entails many deeper questions," one of which is: "What binds us together and makes us one?" The question, of course, presupposes that we are "one."

Summarizing the committee's conclusions and recommendations, Sobel notes that the new report "affirms that understanding both our differences and what we have in common can strengthen the ties that unite us." He states that the committee recommended that "syllabi for the study of United States history and culture should seek to develop . . . understanding and appreciation of the democratic and moral values of our common American culture." He also cites the recommendation that the curriculum should develop "students' capacity to think critically about societal issues. . . ." And immediately in the next paragraph he notes, "we are one people, and we must instill in all students deep respect for the core values and traditions of our society."

"The emphasis," Sobel continues, "is upon depth, not superficial breadth; upon the power of analytic thought, not memory alone." Well, who does not believe that? But are we thinking "analytically," "profoundly," beyond mere memorization of facts when we *begin* with the uncritical assumption that, in fact, we are "one"? Should we not rather begin by asking , "To what extent are we one people in this nation?" How about the question, "Who is the nation, anyway?" What is the relationship between the nation state and the people who make up the bulk of the population? To what extent does a small elite make the major decisions affecting all our lives, and to what extent do the rest of us have any say in these decisions? More worrisome is the question, "To what extent is decision-making power divided along racial, ethnic and class lines?"

In this connection, Sobel cites the recommendation that the curriculum should encourage "seeing oneself as a participant in society." Yet if one cannot even find work, let alone meaningful work — which is surely the destiny of many groups of people who have been isolated into particular ethnic and "racial" categories by the policies of the powers that be in society — to what extent *is* one a "participant"? What kind of "participants" are the homeless?

"Our unity and our diversity are not opposites," Sobel affirms. "Understanding our national history and character necessarily entails an understanding of the political, legal, and cultural roots of our society in England, in Europe, and in the traditions of the West. The facts are that we *are* essentially an English-speaking nation." These "facts" are the very ones the Task

Force on Minorities: Excellence and Equity had questioned. One also has to wonder what "essentially" means at this point. Surely, English is a dominant language, but as we have already noted, in fact only certain dialects of English have prestige and power. It so happens that most of the English dialects of people of color also happen to be the ones lacking in prestige and power.

It is presumably this report that the Board of Regents of New York State and its staff are now using as a guide to develop new social studies and history curricula. The new curricula will demonstrate, in the words of Arthur Schlesinger who wrote a "dissenting opinion," that "our democratic ideals have been imperfectly realized, but the long labor to achieve them and to move the American experiment from exclusion to participation has been a central theme of American history." It must have been a strange experience for the authors of "A Curriculum of Inclusion" to read these echoes of the "consensus model" of American history which prevailed in our universities in the 1950s.

This model has no real explanatory power since it presumes true what remains to be at least debated

It might seem that at least Schlesinger and other members of the Commissioner's Curriculum Review and Development Committee have some sort of theory of history. Actually, this model has no real explanatory power since it presumes true what remains to be at least debated — and has been seriously challenged by some. At least in Schlesinger's expression of the consensus model (a term he does not apply to himself), what is offered is less a theory that makes possible the formulation of appropriate questions and the systematic search for explanation than an interpretation of what our history "means." There is a kind of theology here, a belief that must be taken on faith. The authors, in fact, speak of a "creed" of national pride. This belief might, for example, "explain" the Civil War, the War against Mexico, the War against Spain, the wars against the Native American, and slavery, as, yes, "regrettable failings," but nevertheless part of the "struggle for democracy." The final goal of democracy for all of us is a goal our nation is ever moving toward, always approaching, but never quite reaching.[67] Despite not having reached that goal it is still fair to argue that we are now, and have always been, a democracy. But we might want to call the subjugation of the Native American, the conquests of the Mexican American, Cuban and Puerto Rican — as well as our more recent, but historically ongoing, interferences and support of violence in Central America — something else besides pieces of the "struggle toward democracy."

We need not linger further over "One Nation, Many Peoples." Commissioner Sobel's memo emphasized "consensus" and the "common culture" perhaps more than some of the members of the Committee had wanted. However, even from the little we have said here about the second report one can see how profound are certain differences regarding the way the two groups of scholars appointed by Commissioner Sobel look at history and diversity. They also seem to have rather different agendas for the future. While the Task Force on Minorities advocates a round table where all could meet on an equal basis, the Curriculum Review and Development Committee, at least in Sobel's presentation, seems to envision a different sort of table, where the European and English "roots" of our society take a certain *a priori* precedence over all others.

But as profound as these differences may be, there are also certain similarities between the reports of the two separate committees. If the authors of "A Curriculum of Inclusion" seem to throw around their theoretical terms a bit loosely, the authors of the second report seem to want to predetermine the meaning of history before the question of history is taken up. Their consensus model of history is really no theory at all, but rather the abrogation of the student's right to question our history, ex-

cept within certain prescribed limits. Theory should open up the world to students, not close all doors and windows that lead outside and beyond our present limited perspectives. Neither report carries the authenticity of this kind of theory, either regarding history and social studies as subjects of study, or regarding how to help children and young people become knowledgeable interpreters of their society.

3. Concluding Comments

> I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the Whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual, eminent either in action or speculation. David Hume, *Of National Characters* (1748)[68]

> The Negro is never so much a Negro as since he has been dominated by whites. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* (1968)

The concept of "race" is more a social construction than a scientific description of human reality. It is a product of the multitudinous forces of history. There is little basis for the concept in those sciences whose province is human physical diversity: genetics, physical anthropology, and paleontology. Do the variations we see among humans regarding skin color and other physical characteristics correspond in any way with other human traits, such as intelligence, creativity, morality, verbal ability, etc.? Cultural anthropologists and linguists who have asked this question regarding a vast variety of human societies around the globe have found no scientific basis for believing so.

Anthony Kwame Appiah reaffirms the words of Frantz Fanon cited at the head of this section: "the very category of the Negro is at root a European product: for the 'whites' invented the Negroes in order to dominate them."[69] Africans were not "black" before the arrival of white Europeans who came to plunder, conquer and exploit, and who — because they themselves came from societies that were not homogenous and without their own contradictions — needed reasons to justify such savage institutions as their particular brand of slavery. For "Negro," we may of course substitute an extensive range of other "races": the "Indian," the "Oriental," the "Jew," etc. Geneticists tell us today that there is as much genetic variation within what we loosely call different "races" as there is between any two of such groups.

So why not ignore race, as some critics of multiculturalism have urged? Why not just treat each person as a unique individual? Obviously this will not do, if only because we know that many individuals are not treated in our society simply as individuals, but rather according to how they are identified with particular groups, who are in turn identified in terms of "racial" characteristics. Not everyone would agree with this thesis, of course, especially if we suggest that a certain attention to "race" blemishes the history of the United States. Sociologist Nathan Glazer, whose concerns with multicultural curricula we discussed earlier, has written innumerable articles and several books dealing with questions of ethnicity and race. He argues that, although there have been episodes of racism in this country's history, it cannot be said that they have dominated our history. Instead, the central ethos of American society has been quite different. Referring critically to the "many current writers and scholars [who] argue that racism defines our history," Glazer offers a very different interpretation:

> I think this is a selective misreading of American history: that the American polity has instead been defined by a steady expansion of the definition of those who may be included in it to the point where it now includes all humanity; that the United States has become the first great nation that defines itself not in terms of ethnic origin but in terms of adherence to common rules of citizenship; that no one is now excluded from the broadest access to what the society makes possible; and that this access is combined with a considerable concern for

whatever is necessary to maintain group identity and loyalty.[70]

According to Glazer, the story of American history is one of the emergence of a "distinctive American orientation of ethnic difference and diversity with a history of almost 200 years."[71] He offers several arguments in his essay in favor of the claim that the founding and enduring idea of American democracy has been to reaffirm, through a "national consensus," three "decisions":

(1) the entire world would be allowed to enter the United States;

(2) no separate ethnic group would be allowed to establish an independent polity in the United States;

(3) no group, however, would be required to give up its group character and distinctiveness as the price of full entry into the American society and polity.[72]

Glazer acknowledges that racism existed in the past, that we had the "enslavement of the Negro, anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic movements . . . , the lynching of Chinese, the exclusion of Oriental immigrants,"[73] etc. Nevertheless, these incidents do not define either our history or our justification as "one people." We have already seen what Glazer substitutes for this argument, but what is his purpose? The particular essay from which these quotes are drawn is ultimately an argument against affirmative action programs because they define groups by ethnicity or race, and that has never really been the way of American democracy.[74]

We can easily see why Glazer would not particularly favor a multicultural curriculum: an institutionalized and state-sponsored focus on ethnicity or race — which is what he believes a multicultural curriculum would do — goes against the current of American history. It verges on being un-American. We need not delay over Glazer's arguments here, but it would be instructive for our efforts to understand what multiculturalism is "all about" to consider some counter arguments made by historian Ronald Takaki.

Takaki takes on Glazer's elaborate arguments point for point. His main argument is based on making an important distinction between "race" and "ethnicity" when examining the policies and practices of American government in the way Glazer has. If one makes such a distinction, a very different interpretation of the "main currents" of American history and of the meaning of American democracy is revealed by that history.

Takaki musters a series of well-documented historical facts that, taken together, insist on this distinction. For example, in 1790 Congress passed the Naturalization Law, which "specified that only free 'white' immigrants would be eligible for naturalized citizenship."[75] This law remained in effect until the Walter-McCarran Act of 1952 which asserted the right of a person to become a naturalized citizen of the United States regardless of race. The 1790 law was not merely on the books for 162 years, it was applied many times throughout our history. For example, when entrepreneurs recruited Chinese to build the railroads and work the mines and farm fields in the west, this law locked them into the manual labor sector of the work force, effectively denying them the possibility of becoming citizens. Many states did not allow Chinese laborers to own property. They were defined by law as "aliens ineligible for citizenship."

Such examples abound in Takaki's revisions of Glazer's interpretation of American history. Native Americans were also declared ineligible for citizenship; this allowed the "legal" transfer of their lands to whites and the forced movement of Native peoples westward, and eventually to confinement on reservations where they were told to farm land that was often not arable. Since the "tribes" were defined as "foreign polities," treaties could be exacted from them by the powerful federal government. Only in 1924 were Native Americans admitted *en bloc* into U. S. citizenship.

Similarly, African Americans, even after slavery was abolished, suffered deprival of

their citizenship rights. The New York State Constitution of 1821, for example, established universal manhood suffrage for all "free 'white' male citizens who possessed a freehold, paid taxes, had served in the state militia, or had worked on the highways."[76] The state constitution added an additional stipulation for blacks — that they pay a fee of $250 to register to vote. In another instance, the California State Constitution of 1849 granted the right to vote to Mexicans living in the annexed territories, but only to white male Mexicans who elected to become citizens. Mestizos were defined as "non-white" persons and therefore not eligible for such privileges.

"What actually developed historically in American society was a pattern of citizenship and suffrage which drew a very sharp distinction between 'ethnicity' and 'race'."

Promoters of the Dawes Act of 1887, known as the "Indian Allotment Act," promised that it would be the equivalent of an "Indian Emancipation Act," and that it would "close a century of dishonor." But, in fact, this act granted the president power to break up reservations and allot lands to individual Indians. It gave the federal government the right to sell off any "surplus" reservation lands that were left. It granted Indians small plots of land and houses, but the land was not serviceable for those who had once lived proudly on a subsistence economy. The final result was that by 1934, when the policy ended, Native Americans had lost sixty percent of their land base.[77]

The accumulation of many such examples of racial discrimination under the law leads Takaki to conclude:

> Thus what actually developed historically in American society was a pattern of citizenship and suffrage which drew a very sharp distinction between "ethnicity" and "race."[78]

Takaki does not end his argument before bringing it up to the present era. From what he has said so far, we would have to say that official government policy — not to mention more "informal" treatment by whites —r egarding people of color in our history has often been based on "racial" distinctions, to the usual disadvantage of people of color. Racism has been endemic to "mainstream" America, according to this line of thinking. We have already seen how Henry Louis Gates, Jr. objected to a "psychological model" of racism, attributing racism to "negative attitudes." Such a model ignores certain relations involving the important question of power. Takaki would agree.

For example, if we look at today's African Americans we see how certain features of their socioeconomic status are related to structural economic changes in American society. While the Civil Rights movement and subsequent policies such as affirmative action enabled more black Americans to "make it" into the middle and professional classes, the fact remains that, as a group, they continue to suffer high rates of poverty and unemployment.

Takaki notes that the policy of affirmative action produced a larger black middle class partly because the U. S. economy was still expanding in the 1960s and early 1970s. However, when the economy declined, particularly in the manufacturing centers of the Northeast but in other regions as well, opportunities became more limited for many people. With greater competition from the economies of other countries, American companies went through a series of busts and mergers, one result of which has been the creation of huge multinational corporations which compete in world economies. Finding cheaper labor available in the "Third World," many manufacturers moved their operations.

A "service economy" was created that offered one of two options to, for example, black factory workers: either get more formal education and compete for a profession, or accept the low-paying work offered by fast-food and similar industries.[79] Such considerations lead Takaki to make an im-

portant point, that racism has its structural underpinnings in the very politics and economy of our society:

> Due to racially exclusionist forces and developments in American history, racial inequality and occupational stratification have come to coexist in a mutually reinforcing and dynamic structural relationship which continues to operate more powerfully than direct forms of racial prejudice and discrimination. To diminish the significance of racial oppression in America's past and to define racial inequality as a problem of prejudice and limit the solution as the outlawing of individual acts of discrimination, as does Glazer, is effectively to leave intact the very structures of racial inequality.[80]

The differences between Glazer's and Takaki's views of American history and contemporary society are striking. We have seen what implications Glazer's viewpoint has for a multicultural curriculum. What about Takaki's? The curriculum is not, unfortunately, his subject. But given his support of affirmative action and his refusal to idealize our history, we suspect he would not only "include" all the diverse groups who have created our history and society, but would also somewhere, somehow, want students to learn the truth of that history. And he would particularly want them to understand why "ethnicity" and "race" are qualitatively different categories, and how racism has been intricately involved with our most basic social structures, within the economy and the law.

Culture as Something We Create, Use and Act Upon

These two categories of race and ethnicity need to be distinguished because people who have been defined according to one or the other have been treated differently. But what about some of the other terms that get thrown around so loosely in educational discourse, especially in all the talk about multiculturalism? What about "culture," "social class," "gender," etc.? We hear people talking about "African-American culture," "Puerto Rican culture," "Chicano culture," etc.

We saw that the authors of "A Curriculum of Inclusion" identified "cultures" with those groups who have been defined either ethnically or racially within U. S. society. African Americans have been defined in racial terms, obviously, but in recent years Americans have become more aware of the rich cultural heritage of African Americans — a heritage that is not "racial" in its genesis but something more like the response of an ethnically-definable group to its history. Puerto Ricans, on the other hand, display a wide range of skin colors and facial features, so it is hard to classify them "racially." They seem to be an ethnic group; yet, they can also be classified as "people of color," if only because they have shared a fate similar to that of other people of color, as Takaki showed.

Being classified as persons of color applies only to the U. S. context. What about immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador whose skin color is often dark enough so that they too are seen as "of color"? Are they a "racial" or an "ethnic" group? Before their arrival, most of them had been categorized pejoratively as "*Indio*" ("Indian"); less pejorative is "*indigena*" or "indigenous person) "peon," "campesino ("country person"), etc. in their home countries. These are not strictly racial categories since they usually involve ethnicity as well as race. Sometimes they seem like "castes," at least in the sense of different groups of people being relegated by birth to specific strata in the economy.

"Culture" and "ethnicity" are not synomomous terms.

Not until those who are of lower caste come here do they find themselves in a "color" category in a society that has made sharp distinctions between "white" and "nonwhite." Still, in both countries they experience what it's like to be at the bottom of the political and economic ladder. But here they find themselves sharing the same kinds of experiences as other people of color, despite feeling that otherwise they have anything in common.

One example might be the antagonisms and eruptions of conflict that have sometimes erupted between African Americans and Puerto Ricans. Yet there is considerable evidence of nonconflictual contact between Puerto Rican and African-American urban youth who share many cultural preferences and values. There has been a profound cultural and linguistic exchange between the two groups. To the extent that there is an identifiable "Puerto Rican English" in New York City, it shows considerable influence from Black English. As far as music is concerned, musical forms like rap and hip hop exhibit similar cross influences, and , and mutual interests between African-derived and Spanish-derived (or other European) forms, such as merengue, salsa, reggae etc., go back a long way in the Caribbean, and were brought here by such renowned African-American musicians as Dizzy Gillespie and Duke Ellington.

Such considerations lead one to wonder whether there really *is* an "African-American culture," a "Puerto Rican culture," a "Mexican-American culture," a "Native-American culture"? What about an "Asian culture," or should we only talk about "Chinese culture," "Khmer culture," Vietnamese culture," "Korean culture," "Japanese culture," etc.? We assume cultures are identifiable objects, and we say things like "All members of a culture share the same values, beliefs, ways of using language, ideas about the world, etc." Surely, sharedness is an essential aspect of culture; the term makes no sense unless it applies not merely to this individual or that, but to some sort of coherent social group. Shared ways of thinking and acting and making decisions and interpreting the everyday world are what culture is all about, is that not so?

So does that mean there is *a* "Puerto Rican culture"? Is a Puerto Rican who grows up on the Island the "same" as one who grows up in *El Barrio* (East Harlem) in New York City? Many who have written about this question have answered no. As we saw above, many Island writers have condemned New York Puerto Ricans for becoming "decadent." Yet, even within the New York Puerto Rican community, important cultural differences can be found. Sociologist Pedro Pedraza, a former colleague of mine at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, conducted a lengthy multiple-year ethnographic and sociolinguistic study of the Puerto Rican inhabitants of just one block in El Barrio and found interesting differences.

The differences were not merely those one might expect between one individual and another in any social group; rather, they were differences from one group to another. He found that certain people congregated and "networked" with only certain other people. There were half a dozen or more relatively public networks dividing this mini-community into separate groups. Each group had its own linguistic characteristics. For example, some spoke only Spanish, others spoke mostly English. Some code-switched between the two languages, but not every group did even that in the same way.

There were other differences too. Some were focused around the activities of a Pentecostal chapel on the block. Others were oriented around a social club of people from the same town or region of Puerto Rico. Still others defined themselves through the lens of gender: a group of young males, some of whom had jobs, others of whom had not, drank beer or smoked pot while they conversed about everything in the universe, from women to the economy to death, and everything in between.[81]

But there were connections between the different social groups as well, as some people participated in more than one group, and people communicated from one group to another. And again, much was shared too, such as an apparently contradictory but strong tendency to identify themselves as both "American" and "Puerto Rican,"[82] or a similarly apparently contradictory belief that while Spanish was important to the culture, it was nevertheless not necessary to speak Spanish to be

considered Puerto Rican. The beliefs and values were shared, as well as the tensions between them.

We find sharedness but we also find diversity among groups of people we might have taken as "essentially all alike" had we not looked more closely and gotten acquainted with them. In fact, isn't it becoming commonplace these days to acknowledge that not all African Americans are alike, not all Puerto Ricans are alike, not all Chinese Americans are alike, and so on? The important point here is that the differences we find "within" such groups are not merely individual differences, but involve crosscurrents of different and various cultural streams.

When we talk about "cultures," then, in creating a multicultural curriculum, we need to keep in mind the "conversation" of sameness and difference that goes on within any group we care to identify as such. Culture always seems to involve "tensions" between one way of being and another, as we found for the New York Puerto Rican case. This means we do need to ask ourselves what meanings and intentions the "cultural" part of "multicultural" involves us in. We need to have in mind what we mean by the term "culture" and the implications our view of culture has on the curriculum.

For example, we could think of culture as just a list of things that people do, contrasting "culture" with "nature." A thunderstorm is not a cultural manifestation (at least in the modern secular twentieth century) but a screwdriver is. The screwdriver implies social organization, planning, communication, task specialization, and a host of things that are not the direct products of the natural world. In 1887, one of the founders of modern British anthropology, E. B. Tylor defined culture as just about everything humans have done:

> Culture, or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society.[83]

But such a list cannot take us very far. First of all, it does not provide us any way of talking about relationships between all these things that humans have produced. Secondly, it does not allow us to see culture in relation to the political and economic dimensions of human societies. And thirdly, this definition doesn't help us much when it comes to thinking about the history of cultures and the processes whereby one cultural set of values, beliefs, morals, etc. becomes transformed into something quite new. And finally, it doesn't tell us anything about how culture is produced.

Whatever culture is, it involves processes in which human beings communicate with one another and engage in transactions which produce relationships between them and others. Relationships may be interpersonal or they may be intergroup or interinstitutional. But why do some kinds of relationships get formed and prevail, and others not? How do particular kinds of relationships get established in a society or between societies, and how do they sometimes cease to be, or reappear in a different form? And what comes out of these relationships for the different groups of people who are involved?

Culture is like a "conversation" between sameness and difference, what is shared and what is not.

Think, for example, of the institution of black slavery in the U. S. and other countries, and try to answer these questions. To do so, you must take culture into account. A notion of white supremacy was promulgated and dominated much of white society in the countries where slavery existed. This involved certain beliefs and values, certain ways of classifying people into groups, and certain ways of communicating with each group and within each group. Out of slavery evolved complex and unique cultural traditions among the slaves and later the former slaves — traditions of music and speech, traditions of religion and value —

that still play a prominent role in the lives of many African Americans today.

Slavery was not merely a social or cultural institution, of course. It owed its existence to a particular moment in the economic "expansion" of Western Europe and the United States, and, as we know, the prosperous economy ("prosperous" for *some* people) of the South was created on the backs of black slave laborers. Some white people held power over some black people for the economic benefit of the former at the expense of the latter.

Culture: the thoughts and communications and actions of groups of people — that not only reflect the material world of power struggles and economic competition, but also respond to it.

Culture, politics and economics exist in an interplay; we can't understand one without considering it in relationship to the others. The emergent slave culture was an "adaptation" — in the evolutionary sense of the term — to the political "arrangement" of the powerful and the powerless, and to the economic "arrangement" of the exploitation of labor.

When we think of "culture" in these ways, we can understand it not merely as an object that doesn't change, but rather as a complex collection of dynamic social forces —t he thoughts and communications and actions of groups of people — that not only reflect the material world of power struggles and economic competition, but also *respond* to it. In the book *Europe and the People Without History,* anthropologist Eric Wolf puts it well:

> The concept of a fixed, unitary, and bounded culture must give way to a sense of the fluidity and permeability of cultural sets. In the rough-and-tumble of social interaction, groups are known to exploit the ambiguities of inherited forms, to impart new evaluations or valences to them, to borrow forms more expressive of their interests, or to create wholly new forms to answer to changed circumstances.[84]

Culture is about group survival and well-being; it is the specifically human adaptation to the material world. Looking at culture as process and response, as the construction and definition of a specifically human — i.e., social — world, allows us to think about the complexities and internal diversity of those so-called "cultural groups" that the report "A Curriculum of Inclusion" took for granted as cultural entities. For example, while rap music is clearly a prominent feature in African-American communities today, not every member of the community feels the same way about it. Cornell West and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. criticize certain elements of rap in their books referred to earlier. Yet they write as African Americans about African-American concerns.

These reflections return us to Gates' discussion of what he called "marketplace culture." He noted its importance and its potential for destructiveness as regards African-American communities and cultures. Similarly, Cornell West refers:

> [to] corporate market institutions . . . , that complex set of interlocking enterprises that have a disproportionate amount of capital, power, and exercise a disproportionate influence on how our society is run and how our culture is shaped. Needless to say, the primary motivation of these institutions is to make profits, and their basic strategy is to convince the public to consume. These institutions have helped create a seductive way of life, a culture of consumption that capitalizes on every opportunity to make money.[85]

West helps us make an important distinction. There surely is something like a "marketplace culture," more euphemistically referred to as "mass media culture" or "popular culture." We may want to use the term "culture" to refer to the productions of the marketplace, but we must recognize that in this one sense it is different from the "traditional" cultures we have discussed so far. Where their functions are group survival and well-being, marketplace

culture — in its "blind" search for profits — has no such goal. In fact, it uses the traditional culture for its own materialistic purposes, such as employing popular cultural symbols like Michael Jordan to sell something to particular "targeted" markets: black and Hispanic urban youth, for example. Its only concern is to turn us into consumers.

Yet, for those who become consumers, the profit motive is not likely to be in the forefront of their minds. Something else is going on when, let's say, young African Americans adopt the wearing of "X" symbols on caps and T-shirts at the time Spike Lee's film biography of Malcolm X was being promoted on television and in print media. Symbols such as this, or the loose baggy clothes of homeboys and homegirls, or gold jewelry, or certain types of gym shoes, or movies whose theme is violence, *mean* something to the black and Latino youth who consume these products.

What is important for us to keep in mind is that, just as with every other manifestation of culture, people take up these symbols from the marketplace culture because they do have meaning, because they do seem to help them function in their particular context. It is important also to remember that an important aspect of that context is the growing sense young people of color are likely to have as they emerge into the adult world, of the limitations our society places upon their life options simply *because* they are classified as people of color. The very marketplace culture which has depended on their labor — or the labor of their parents and grandparents — and the very marketplace culture which only wants to turn them into consumers, is also often a source of symbols of resistance to this exploitation. Or, more accurately, it is less the source of these symbols, than the means of propagating them and turning them into mass media artifacts. The "X" of Malcolm X was not invented by international corporations; but someone knew a "good thing" when they saw it.

If we look at culture as adaptive processes, we may also then legitimately ask the question, "To what is a particular cultural pattern, symbol or activity an adaptation?" And, "How good an adaptation is it for those who make use of it?" These are questions Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has urged us to ask when he says that "part of taking other cultures . . . seriously is being able to disagree with them."[86] Marketplace culture has nothing of the well-being of its consumers in mind at all, and certainly not the well-being of communities and their cultures. Some cultural artifacts created by corporations and sold to young people of color — even though they may serve some function for those young people — may also be destructive. The 32-ounce bottle of beer that has been so effectively promoted among Latino and African-American urban youth might be an example. Another is the promotion of exploitative images of women.

Ethnicity Is Not "Primordial"

Ronald Takaki shows us that race and ethnicity need to be treated as separate concepts because people categorized as a "racial" group have been treated differently from those categorized as "ethnic." We also have argued that "race" is not a scientific concept but rather a social construct created by the powerful to justify the exploitation of the less powerful. But what about ethnicity? Does this have any basis in reality other than what people say it is, or what they say are the "characteristics" or "traditions" of this or that group? The concept of ethnicity is important in considering a multicultural curriculum, since ethnic identity plays such an important role in modern societies. Ironically, those who support multiculturalism often share some of the same misconceptions about ethnicity as those who do not.

The mistake people who write about multiculturalism, favorably or not, often make is to assume that ethnic identity is a "primordial essence."

The mistake people who write about multiculturalism, favorably or not, often make is to assume that ethnic identity is a "primordial essence," something so fundamental to one's being that one has no control over it. If you oppose multiculturalism, you are likely to argue that there are "deep-seated" fears and hostilities between ethnic groups that must be suppressed or at least discouraged. Otherwise conflict is inevitable. "Writer" Kay S. Hymowitz expresses this misconception in an "Op-Ed" article in the *New York Times* where she claimed that "Culture is an essentially conservative force. It binds people to a past laden with powerful traditions and beliefs and often obligates them to strict, customary discipline."[87] She concludes from this:

> Ersatz celebrations of diversity, "progressive" first grade curriculums and phrases like "gorgeous mosaic" may erxase fears about hatred, but they also subvert a cautious pluralism that soberly recognizes the passions inspired by cultural identities.[88]

As a matter of fact, such a conception of social groups misses the point Eric Wolf and other anthropologists have made that culture is an adaptive process; when conditions change, cultures change. Like the grammars of all languages, cultures contain within them the seeds of change. Culture is at least as much a creative process as it is conservative.[89] Ethnic identity becomes a cultural force within particular societies only under certain circumstances.

We know that ethnicity can simply fade away, as has happened with many European immigrants over a few generations. We know, too, that it can maintain itself as a unitary force, also for generations. Puerto Ricans have maintained their identity on the U. S. mainland for generations; there are Hispanic Americans in New Mexico who cling to an ethnicity and culture that had its original impetus in the migrations of Sephardic Jews from Spain to the New World in the sixteenth century. We also know of many cases of reaffirmation of ethnic identity and cultural tradition by groups whose identities had, in fact, faded into apparent oblivion.

For example, cultural historian James Clifford chronicles the revitalization of the Native-American group the Mashpee, including the successful suit for possession of lands on the shores of Cape Cod by the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Council in federal court.[90]

The fact is, we shape our image of "the other" to comply with our own dreams of power, status, redemption, transcendence, etc. Cultural and ethnic identity are less a matter of "essences" than a function of relationships between "us" and those we deem to be "other" that evolve over time, that have historical as well as contemporaneous dimensions:

> "Cultural" difference is no longer a stable, exotic otherness; self-other relations are matters of power and rhetoric rather than of essence.[91]

We can better understand ethnicity, and particularly the new forms of diversity in modern societies, if we consider what brings ideas of ethnic and cultural identity to prominence in particular historical situations. What are the forces encouraging identification through ethnicity in a given situation? And what are the forces turning this identification with one group or another into conflicts between groups so identified?

In fact, we have much evidence that it is not cultural or ethnic differences *per se* that cause conflict. We know of societies in which different groups have managed to live cooperatively together for many generations. Rather, conflict is caused by such things as the maldistribution of society's wealth and resources, the unequal relations of power that obtain in modern societies, and the exploitation of one group by another. In such situations, ethnic identity — as well as other forms of group identification — may well be used to mobilize one group against another, even when this is not in the interests of either group.

As a matter of fact, ethnicity, whatever its historical forms, cannot be understood without considering how ethnic groups have come to be identified with certain sec-

tors of the national and world labor markets. According to anthropologist Eric Wolf, when groups of people become involved in migratory processes — such as the Irish who emigrated to North America in the nineteenth century, or the Poles who arrived in the U. S. in the early twentieth century — they become identified with particular forms of labor which are made available to them. They may also be put into a situation of competition with other potential laborers, such as African Americans who were not offered the same opportunities to work in the factories of the industrial north until their labor was needed during World War II.

Young people need to be given the opportunity to learn about their world as it actually is. They also need to be helped to acquire the knowledge and skills that will enable them to continue learning, continue reflecting, continue developing their critical understanding about the world around them as it changes and as they participate in making it change.

There is no doubt that ethnic and cultural differences may be exploited by the unscrupulous to transform those differences into hostility and hatred, as we can see today in India, the former Yugoslavia, and Crown Heights in New York City. But to attribute these hatreds to "primordial feelings" or the "conservative" nature of culture is misguided and shows a failure to understand that ethnic identity and culture are always linked to political and economic processes.

Conclusion to the Conclusion: Some Basic Presuppositions

I wanted to include this chapter in this report because I think the public discourse on multicultural education is important. I also think that many of the arguments have been slung back and forth like mud-pies are flawed. So I have taken on some of the more prominent of these arguments and asked some questions that had been left out of the discourse. I also used "representative persons"[92] as exemplars of various strands of thought about multicultural education, and more generally about diversity in U. S. society. I have drawn on the views of scholars like Anthony Appiah, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Bell Hooks, Ronald Takaki, Cornell West, and Eric Wolf to help us reflect more deeply on the arguments against making diversity the central theme of our public school curriclum.

But whether I have used my own arguments or borrowed those of others is . this discussion. . They form the presuppositions of my arguments which, it should be obvious by now, advocate that, yes, diversity ought to be at the core of the curriculum. They are the same presuppositions I rely on whenever I think about how we as a society bring up our children and young folks into responsible adulthood. These assumptions are partly philosophical, partly ethical and only partly scientific, though I begin with the proviso that science will always take precedence in our search for truth, or at least for more accurate descriptions of our world.

This last notion is linked to what I suppose is the linchpin of all my arguments and questions about multicultural education: the belief that we should be educating the coming generation with a long-term view toward transforming our institutions into structures that exist for the benefit of all members of society, rather than to give advantages to some at the expense of others, which is largely the way the world works at present. Young people need to be given the opportunity to learn about their world as it actually is. They also need to be helped to acquire the knowledge and skills that will enable them to continue learning, continue reflecting, continue developing their critical understanding about the world around them as it changes and as they participate in making it change.

This admonition to "tell it like it is" does not mean that we must simply pour all of human society's travails and failures on young people all at once. Obviously, the child's level of development at each phase of his or her growth needs to be taken into account in devising curricula that meet that child's needs. Nor does it mean that a curriculum should be full of "doom and gloom." We have not sufficiently emphasized the cultural riches that are now available to us as the new forms of diversity take shape in the U. S. and other societies. It is the alternative ways of thinking about human life and the material world that different cultures have created, as well as the possibilities for cultural exchange between diverse human groups, that really offer our best hope.

If curriculum is seen as part of the educational process of not merely transmitting our cultural heritage to the next generation, but rather of helping the next generation recreate and reform that heritage into something more humane, then it seems obvious that multiculturalism — attention to human diversity -- must be at the center of that curriculum. If we hope that the younger generation now growing toward adulthood will have any chance at all of changing a divided and conflicted world for the better, we must also go well beyond the subject matter of multiculturalism and create opportunities in our educational programs for children and young people to experience diversity in a variety of ways. We need more than curriculum content and analytical tools, important as these are. We need to rethink the kinds of learning activities we engage the young in, the kinds of cooperative endeavors we offer them, and the opportunities we make available to them to take control of their own learning and to apply their learning to social change.

Those who have been engaged in the debates over multiculturalism might do well to take a closer look at Manhattan Country School's educational program. While public education has only recently taken up the theme, multiculturalism has been an important focus at MCS since its founding nearly thirty years ago. Moreover, while the content and design of the curriculum have been significantly innovative, these are not the only important features of multiculturalism at MCS. Rather, the curriculum is supported by other aspects of the School—including admissions policies, the tuition system, the hiring of staff, approaches to instruction, the use of specialist teachers, and a comprehensive philosophy of education. Most particularly, it is centered on a vision of a nonracist, diverse, cooperative and equitable society. In the next chapter, then, I will look more closely at this vision and philosophy, as well as consider some of the special features of the School's educational program that support the vision. And in succeeding chapters, we will look more closely at what actually gets taught in the School that might lead one to view MCS as a model of multicultural education.

Notes

1. James Crawford, *Hold Your Tongue*, New York: Addison-Wesley, 1992, p. 34.

2. Cited in James Crawford, *Bilingual Education: Politics, Theory, and Practice*, Trenton, NJ: Crane, 1989, p. 21.

3. James Crawford discusses the German language issue and Franklins fears in some detail in his well-written and carefully researched book, *Hold Your Tongue: Bilingualism and the Politics of 'English Only'*, New York: Adison-Wesley.

4. To complicate matters further, some of the new immigrants feel just as threatened by the kinds of conditions — including much racial strife —t hey find after they arrive here.

5. For example, Danesh d'Souza's *Illiberal Education*, New York: Vintage, 1992.

6. Sobel appointed the Committee after the prior Commissioner's Task Force on Minorities had issued its report, *A Curriculum of Inclusion* (July 1989). The report received considerable criticism, and Schlesinger deals with it in detail in his book, *The Disuniting of America*. Schlesinger, and other critics, were particularly concerned with such assertions in the report as the following:

> An educational system centered around the Eurocentric world view is limited and narrow and fails to provide a global perspective. Inevitably, it projects the Anglo-Saxon value system and prevents European American youth, as well as youth of other cultures, from the benefit of a broad-based learning experience.
>
> Simultaneously, the Eurocentric world view perpetuates processes of negative socialization for African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos and Native Americans. . . . (p.35)
>
> In the traditional Eurocentric educational program, we are presented with "white nationalism" that makes marginal all other peoples. (pp. 36-37)

The recommendations issued by Sobel's office after the second report was issued seemed intended to assuage the fears of these "monoculturalist" critics.

7. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1992.

8. Nathan Glazer, "In Defense of Multiculturalism," *The New Republic*, Sept. 2, 1991, p. 19. Glazer's "acceptance" of multiculturalism in the curriculum is rather paternalistic and patronizing towards African Americans: let them have an "Afrocentric" curriculum if they must, if that will make them more like white Americans; after all, they *have* suffered a lot.

9. Glazer, *Ibid.*, p 22.

10. Rodolfo de la Garza, et al, Eds., *Latino Voices: Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban Perspectives on American Politics*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

11. Albert Shankar, "Joining the Mainstream," an advertisement in "The Week in Review" section of the *Sunday New York Times*, April 11, 1993.

12. In fact, a number of studies conducted by the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, CUNY, indicate that poverty has been on the increase for Puerto Ricans in New York City, and that Puerto Rican children are continuing to have limited success in the public schools, as indicated by continuing high drop out rates, low rates of admission to four-year colleges, low rates of graduation from high school or college, scores on standardized tests, etc. See, for example, Andres Torres, "Explaining Puerto Rican poverty," *Boletín*, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, 1987. See also, Language Policy Task Force (C. Alvarez, A. Bennett, M. Greenlee, P. Pedraza, A. Pousada), *Speech and Ways of Speaking in a Bilingual Puerto Rican Community*, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, 1988. For independent analyses, see Mayor's Office City of New York, *First Annual Report on Hispanic Concerns*, 1987; and, Reyes, Louis, "Demographics of PuertoRican/Latino Students in New York and the United States, Aspira of New York, Inc., 1987.

13. The three communities were studied in the early 1950s by anthropologist and sociolinguist John Gumperz. See John Gumperz, The Swabian Dialect of Washtenaw County, Michigan, doctoral dissertaion, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1954.

14. James Crawford, *Hold Your Tongue: Bilingualism and the Politics of "English Only*, New York: Addison-Wesley, 1992, pp. 58-59.

15. I use the term anthropologist Keith Basso notes is common among Apaches, as well as other indigenous peoples. See Keith Basso,

Portraits of the "Whiteman," New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

16. James Crawford, *Hold Your Tongue*, pp. 43-44.

17. Cited in Adrian Bennett, *An Introduction to Bilingual Education*, Brooklyn, NY: Sunflower Communications, 1992, p. 10.

18. Darcy McNickle's novels detail both the pain of encounters with the Whiteman, and the rich resources, so often wasted in the U. S. context, of native communities. *Wind from an Enemy Sky*, and *The Surrounded*, both published by Oklahoma University press. Among Vine Deloria's many books, see *Custer Died for Your Sins: an Indian Manifesto*, New York: Avon Books, 1969, and *American Indians, American Justice*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1983.

19. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 113.

20. Robert Hughes, *The Culture of Complaint*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

21. Paradoxically, this "common core" is in fact already widely shared by Americans. Hirsch asserts that "about eighty percent of the knowledge commonly shared by literate Americans has not changed for more than a hundred years and is not likely to be quickly outmoded."

22. E. D. Hirsch, *A First Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989, p. 88.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

24. The "Huron" (from French hure, meaning boar, savage, ruffian), or Wyandot group, were deliberately destroyed by the Iroquois, absorbed by them, or dispersed eventually among groups to the west. Eric Wolf discusses the north American fur trade and its profound cultural, economic and political effects on indigenous peoples from Nova Scotia to the Pacific shores in *The People Without History*, Berkeley, CA: University of Calfornia Press, 1979.

25. Hirsch, *A First Dictionary*, p. xi.

26. We are finally learning to recognize the immense value of the cultural contributions of peoples who are "preliterate," whose society uses oral traditions to pass down the group's cultural knowledge. We also know that there are many kinds of literacy that have been manifested in different societies, many of which have been intensively studied, such as ancient China, the contemporary Vai of Central Africa, the ancient Greeks, medieval and Renaissance scribes in Europe, the Maya and the Inca of precolumbian cultures, etc. Different literacies imply the possibility of a hierarchy of literacies, with oral traditions on a lower rank, and the current canon of literary trends at perhaps the highest level. In between, certain standards of both written and spoken communication are created by the elites of a society, and these become the standards everyone else must be held to. Many people in the U. S. do not yet recognize the validity of oral traditions among, for example, African Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans. For discussions see: Arian Bennett and Pedro Pedraza, "Discourse, Consciousness and Literacy in a Puerto Rican Neighborhood," in *Language and Power*, edited by C. Kramarae, M. Schulz, and W. M. O'Barr, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1984; Jack Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987; Jack Goody (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1978; Gerald Graff, *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987.

27. I am obviously not advocating that the age group of children (up to 6th grade) Hirsch's *First Dictionary* is intended for should start studying the North American fur trade as part of an expanding European-based mercantile capitalism and the competition within Europe that propelled that expansion. Content and learning strategies must be appropriate to the child. But teachers need to be aware of these historical relationships, as should the writers of texts for children and young

people. Rather than "Columbus discovered," why not say, "Columbus *arrived*"? We might even add: "Europeans saw this as a great "discovery." But the people already living in the Americas saw it quite differently, and in many different ways, as well."

28. E. D. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

29. From a linguistic — which is to say, scientific — oint of view, Black English is simply another dialect of English. It has its own self-contained grammar — most of which is equivalent to that of "standard" English, some of which is rather different. The differences have been well documented in linguistic studies. Linguist William Labov mustered convincing arguments over two decades ago that there is nothing "inadequate" about either Black English or its speakers. Quite the contrary: Black English has many rich, creative modes of expression not found in other dialects of English, including "standard" dialects. Black English has a complete grammar and a rich vocabulary; it is no more incorrect to use the double negative in certain kinds of sentences in Black English than it is to do so in Castellano, the dialect of Spanish which many take as a model. See William Labov, *Language in the Inner City,* Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania, 1972. For a more recent discussion, see John Baugh's competent book, *Black Street Speech:Its History, Structure, and Survival,* Austin, TX: U. of Texas, 1983. Geneva Smitherman offers a lively and nontechnical discussion for the linguistically unitiated in *Talkin and Testifyin: the Language of Black America*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977.

    Similar arguments may be made about other common forms of language in use in this country, such as the mixture of Spanish and English that linguists refer to as "code switching" and that journalists and others pejoratively label "Spanglish," as if that too were a debased form of language, neither "correct" English nor "correct" Spanish. Yet, linguists have shown through careful study that the people who code switch in this way are simply bilingual and follow the grammatical rules of each language, or of the dialects of each language they speak. Yet, again, here we have an example of what a "nonstandard" form of language actually is: it is not linguistically inferior to the standard, but it certainly has less prestige and status and power associated with it in the "mainstream" society.

30. For example, Rene Marques, *The Docile Puerto Rican.*

31. "A Curriculum of Inclusion," Report of the [New York State's Education] Commissioner's Task Force on Minorities: Equity and Excellence, July 1989, Appendix 4, p. 15.

32. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Weaning of America," *The New Yorker,* April 19, 1993, pp. 113-117.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

34. *Ibid*, p. 115.

35. *Ibid*, p. 116.

36. *Ibid*, p. 116.

37. *Ibid*, p. 116.

38. Task Force on Minorities: Equity and Excellence, July 1989, p. 3.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

40. The authors of the four appendices were as follows: Dr. Shirley Hune, Hunter College, CUNY (*Asian American*); Dr. Leonard Jeffries, Dept. of African Studies, City College of New York, CUNY (*African American*); Dr. Carlos Rodriguez-Fratelli, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY (*Puerto Rican / Latino*); Mr. Lincoln White, (no affiliation given) (*Native American*).

41. *Ibid.*, p. iii.

42. *Ibid.*, p. iv.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 37. Incidentally, it depends on which version of King Arthur one reads. In, for example, Thomas Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur,* those who sat nearest to the King were clearly more privileged. Others had to prove their worth through "great deeds."

51. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

52. *Ibid.*, Appendix 4, p. 8.

53. *Ibid.*, Appendix 4, p. 13.

54. *Ibid.*, Appendix 4, p. 17.

55. *Ibid.*, Appendix 4, p. 23.

56. *Ibid.*, Appendix 4, p. 25.

57. *Ibid.*, Appendix 4, p. 24.

58. Both quotes, *Ibid.*, Appendix 4, p. 14.

59. *Ibid.*, Appendix 4, p. 18.

60. *Ibid.*, Appendix 4, p. 21.

61. *Ibid.*, Appendix 4, p. 13.

62. *Ibid.*, Appendix 4, p. 15.

63. Puerto Rico was, before its annexation by the U.S., largely a rural economy in which large plantations, usually growing sugar, dominated over the many subsistence farmers whose small plots were not sufficient to free them from devoting months of hard labor at low wages on those same plantations. Today, Puerto Rico is the most intensively industrialized "nation" in Latin America, largely due to the "Bootstrap Operation" in which the U.S. government has granted substantial tax breaks to corporations who move operations to the Island. See, for discussion, Frank Bonilla and Ricardo Campos, *Industry and Idelness*, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY, 1986; and: Alfredo López, *Doña Licha's Island: Modern Colonialism in Puerto Rico,* Boston: South End Press, 1987. Such drastic economic and political changes have been accompanied by profound cultural changes as well, and one finds both on the Island and in the mainland Puerto Rican enclaves a considerable cultural variety within these communities, with agrarian values mixing with modern urban values, all of which remains very much infused with cultural elements that can be traced back to an African heritage. On this latter theme see Adrian Bennett and Pedro Pedraza, "Literacy and consciousness in a Puerto Rican neighborhood," in *Language and Power,* edited by C. Kramarae, M. Schulz, and W. M. O'Barr, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1984.

64. For an ethnographic study of one block in East Harlem, (*"El Barrio,"*) see Pedro Pedraza, *An Ethnographic Study of Language Use in the Puerto Rican Community of East Harlem,* Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, Working Paper #12, 1987. Pedraza describes several different social networks, each with their own values, their own relation to the past in Puerto Rico, their own use of Spanish and/or English: His findings are summarized in Adrian Bennett, *Believing in Bilingual Education: A Sociolinguistic, Historical and Cultural Perspective.* Brooklyn, NY: Sunflower Communications, 1992.

65. See, for example: bell hooks on the black power movement in her book, *Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics*, Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990, p. 16. See also June Jordan, *Technical Difficulties,* New York: Pantheon, 1992. See also Cornell West, *Race Matters*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1993.

Insistence on patriarchal values, on equating black liberation with black men gaining access to male privilege that would enable them to assert power over black women, was one of the most significant forces undermining radical struggle.

66. At this writing, the full report, "One Nation, Many Peoples," was not available from the New York State Department of Education. I rely here on Sobel's excerpts, which include in an appendix the full list of the Committee's recommendations.

67. Historian Ronald Takaki presents both the "consensus" model — argued in an essay by Nathan Glazer —a nd a detailed counter-argument in his edited collection, *From Different Shores: Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity in America,* Oxford University Press, 1987. The "consensus" model of history evolved partly in response to "conflict" models of such historians as Charles Beard who had argued in his influential *Economic History of the Constitution* that the American Revolution was essentially a class war that mainly served the interests of the col nial elites.

68. Cited in Anthony Kwame Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 52.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

70. Nathan Glazer, "The Emergence of an American Ethnic Pattern," in Ronald Takaki, *From Different Shores,* p. 14.

71. *Ibid,* p. 13.

72. *Ibid,* p. 14.

73. *Ibid,* p. 14.

74. Ronald Takaki describes Glazer's role in the battle against affirmative action in "Reflections on Racial Patterns in America," collected in *From Different Shores*: "Nathan Glazer of Harvard University has emerged as the leading architect of this new anti-affirmative action scholarshiop, and his book, *Affirmative Discrimination: Ethnic Inequality and Public Policy,* spearheaded the intellectual assault on affirmative action.

75. Takaki, *From Different Shores,* p. 28.

76. Ibid, p. 29.

77. Ibid, p. 31.

78. Ronald Takaki, "Reflections on Racial Patterns in America," In R. Takaki, (ed.), *From Different Shores.*

79. Black Americans are not the only group that has suffered from these economic developments. Puerto Ricans have suffered equally or even more along all the usual measurements of poverty. Their economic situation has in fact worsened, both on the Island and on the mainland, since the 1970s. See Andres Torres, "Explaining Puerto Rican poverty," *op cit.*

80. Takaki, "Reflections on Racial Patterns," p. 36.

81. For a summary of Pedraza's ethnographic study, see: Language Policy Task Force (C. Alvarez, A. Bennett, M. Greenlee, P. Pedraza, A. Pousada), *Speech and Ways of Speaking in a Bilingual Puerto Rican Community,* Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, 1988. For a discussion of the cultural significance of a casual conversation between two Puerto Rican men, one with, one without a job, see Adrian Bennett and Pedro Pedraza, "Discourse, Consciousness and Literacy in a Puerto Rican Neighborhood," in *Language and Power,* op cit., pp. 243-259.

82. See John Attinasi, "Language Attitudes in a New York Puerto Rican Community," in *Bilingual Education and Public Policy in the United States,* ed. by R. V. Padilla, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Bilingual Studies, Michigan State University.

83. Cited in M. Dimen-Schein, *The Anthropological Imagination,* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977, p. 22.

84. Eric Wolf , *Europe and the People Without History,* p. 387.

85. Cornell West, *Race Matters,* p. 16.

86. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Weaning of America," *The New Yorker,* April 19, 1993, p. 116.

87. *"Multiculturalism is Anti-Culture," New York Times,* March 25, 1993, p. A23.

88. *Ibid.*

89. In fact, the idea that culture is *essentially* conservative stems from traditions in American cultural anthropology that were contemporaneous with the models of "consensus history" that dominated American universities in the post-World War II period. That belief that culture is conservative, just like the belief that U. S. history is essentially a history of a developing "consensus," may be considered part of the "culture" of academia in this period. Such beliefs certainly had important political implications. For the "conservative" view of culture see, for example, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: a critical review of concepts and definitionas*, New York: Vintage, 1952. Whether culture is essentially conservative or creative is really not the question if we assume culture is a set of processes by means of which social groups respond to historical conditions, we can see that sometimes cultures are conservative, sometimes creative, sometimes both — usually both, most likely.

90. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.

91. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, p. 14.

92. I have "updated" Emerson's term "Representative Men" in the book of that title.

Chapter Two
Visions of Diversity

Being in a heterogeneous group enriches a child's exposure; it arouses greater stimulation of thought and it provides a broad exchange of ideas, feelings, fears and hopes. I can think of no condition more conducive to intellectual growth and the development of social and moral values than the kind of vigorous interaction which goes on within a group where varying points of view are grounded in actual differences of experience. (Augustus Trowbridge.)

Ideals into Practice: *First Principles*

Everything that happens at Manhattan Country School is touched in one way or another by a vision. The School was founded in 1965 out of a vision of what United States society could be and an analysis of what was not. The vision made possible a response to the findings of that analysis, because part of the vision was a belief in the necessity of action. Action was defined as the actualization of ideals. This particular action involved creating an institution that would play a singular role in the hoped-for emergence of a society in the U. S. that would finally put into practice for all its people certain ideals on which the country was supposedly founded. These ideals were clearly stated in the *First Principles*, a document created in 1965 by "a small group of dissatisfied educators who had been working in the elite private schools of

[New York] City," and authored by Augustus Trowbridge who would become the School's first director:[1]

> The founding principles have been written to be modified, expanded and strengthened but they are the seed, I hope, of a school, a small, coeducational, elementary school in New York City, whose chief philosophical principles emerge from the values of a working democracy: interdependence, self-reliance, free inquiry and a respect for differences.[2]

These principles led to the establishment of certain premises for the School that was planned:

> The overriding goal was to have a diverse student population, racially, culturally and economically. Despite an inherent dislike of quotas, the original planners were anxious to create an environment in which no student would feel the pressures of being a token representative of a group, or the arrogance that often accompanies the members of a strong and powerful group within a school.[3]

". . . a small, coeducational, elementary school in New York City, whose chief philosophical principles emerge from the values of a working democracy: interdependence, self-reliance, free inquiry and a respect for differences."

Once the School was up and running, outside observers noted the presence of both the School's founding principles and its particular idea of what integration should mean, as these blossomed in the daily lives of students and teachers. Journalist Peter Schrag wrote in the *Saturday Review* in 1968, two years after the School first opened its doors:

> Manhattan Country School is private, but in the way that it is integrated—racially, economically, culturally—and in its educational promise, it represents what the public school in America was ideally supposed to be but rarely managed. The school does not preach integrated education or human relations, but the diversity of backgrounds of its pupils is one of its great curricular assets.[4]

Schrag is too optimistic about "what the public school in America was ideally supposed to be." Public schooling was historically not available to all alike; when public schools were open to some groups, the schools for those groups were underfunded and generally undermined by policies of *de facto* apartheid. However, Schrag's observation of integration in the School is well-supported in documents the School has produced, as well as in oral narratives provided in interviews of staff who were working at the School at that time. What his misstatement of history might lead us to forget is that, in respect of integration, MCS is surely among a small minority of schools — private or publi c— in the U. S. But it is not merely the current crisis in public education that makes MCS seem unique, and a model; it is the history of public schooling in America, as well. The founders of the School believed they were taking a new turn in history. They had an Emersonian optimism about the future, and about the role the School could play in building a democratic future for our society.

Joan Erikson and Peggy Penn conducted a study at MCS over a period of several months under the direction of Erik Erickson. They observed an Emersonian strain in the School's community. They saw a democracy of a diverse population of students, with each individual student becoming a member of the community through self-expression. In a letter to the Director in 1971, Erik Erikson wrote:

> For me the days at your school have always been a fountain of encouragement. . . . If we cannot demonstrate at least in some model situations the necessary conditions for the full development of the communal sense and the personal self-expression of a well-integrated variety of children, we would not know what to aim for when we attempt to apply our findings to the wider scene.[5]

These observations of diversity grew out of a recognition that the lives of the various communities of which this "pluralistic" soci-

ety consisted were of utmost importance. But the message of diversity was balanced, or offset, by a concern with the individual.

"Manhattan Country School is private, but in the way that it is integrated . . . and in its educational promise, it represents what the public school in America was ideally supposed to be but rarely managed."

The mention of "self-reliance" in the statement from the *First Principles* reiterates the title of one of Ralph Waldo Emerson's most well-known essays: "Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense."[6] Self-expression was for Emerson the only way to reveal the "true" and the "good," themselves emanations of divine ideals: "We but half express ourselves," he said, admonishing those who repress their inner voice, "and are ashamed of that divine idea which each of us represents."[7] "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind."[8] In a similar vein, the *First Principles* assert that "a school which seeks to build a living model of a democratic society must . . . create and sustain an atmosphere in which every child and adult is truly valued for his individuality."[9]

But Emerson, opposed the individual voice to the conformism of groups[10] which tended to deaden all creative self-expression in the interests of protecting property. The *First Principles,* on the contrary, link the heterogeneity of groups to individual self-expression, making the very cultivation of heterogeneity the vehicle for the educational development of each individual child:

> The real value of diversity exists when differences are allowed — indeed encouraged — to prevail at all levels of the school community.
>
> Being in a heterogeneous group enriches a child's exposure; it arouses greater stimulation of thought and it provides a broad exchange of ideas, feelings, fears and hopes. I can think of no condition more conducive to intellectual growth and the development of social and moral values than the kind of vigorous interaction which goes on within a group where varying points of view are grounded in actual differences of experience.[11]

The *First Principles* therefore advocate "an individualized approach to learning" that would cultivate the uniqueness of each child's voice by encouraging its expression as one voice in conversation with all the others in the group. This emphasis drew on an educational model practiced in some private schools at the time, the "Dalton Plan," which "would be an important part of a solution to the many different viewpoints and skill levels that would undoubtedly be encountered"[12] in the School's student population.

The "Dalton Plan" was but one among many innovations that were being attempted in U. S. schools in the 1960s. Similarly, other innovations featured open classrooms, elimination of tracking and letter grades, group orientation, teachers as facilitators and advisers, and whole language models of teaching reading (competing with phonics throughout this period and later). The "Dalton Plan" allowed regular "laboratory time" to students in which they were free to do independent work, each student using resources available in the school according to his or her individual needs.

The alternative educational trends I am most familiar with are those that have some relation to sociolinguistics and anthropology, my professional fields. These research fields have shifted attention away from the individualistic and psychologistic studies of "attitudes," and away from explanations that blame families and communities for the high failure rates of certain

The real value of diversity exists when differences are allowed — indeed encouraged — to prevail at all levels of the school community.

groups of children in public schools.[13] There was also a shift away from explaining school failure of certain ethnic or "racial" minority groups in terms of large-scale structures, such as social class or caste differentiations.

Instead there was increasing emphasis on looking at what went on day to day in classrooms. Ethnographic studies of children interacting and learning in schools and classrooms proliferated. Explanations of the school failure of certain groups of students — Puerto Ricans, Blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans — were put forth. These children came to school with a "culture" and ways of communicating that were different from, sometimes alien to, the dominant "mainstream" culture. Teachers misinterpreted the intentions of these students. Students failed and became discouraged, dropping out in high numbers. Solutions offered for these problems included teacher training in cultural awareness, as well as hiring teachers represented the cultural diversity of students in the schools.

The languages, dialects, and cultural practices children bring to school — however different they may seem from what our schools have traditionally valued — are neither the result of "cultural deprivation," nor "dysfunctional," but rather have value in themselves insofar as they are the lifeblood of specific communities in our society.

There was much truth to these findings. Particularly valuable, I think, was the wealth of detailed information gathered regarding how cultural differences are played out in ordinary, everyday life contexts. The focus on interaction helped us recognize how loaded with meaning, value and implication are the daily transactions that our children are engaged in, both in and out of school. They helped us understand more fully how teaching and learning are transactional, dialogic processes, and therefore to realize in concrete and specific detail how these transactions are conducted and why they have the particular outcomes of "success" or "failure." We also became more aware that the languages, dialects, and cultural practices children bring to school — however different they may seem from what our schools have traditionally valued — are neither the result of "cultural deprivation," nor "dysfunctional," but rather have value in themselves insofar as they are the lifeblood of specific communities in our society. Such studies have led to greater accommodation of social and cultural differences in our schools.

But these "micro-analytic" studies lacked reference to large-scale social structures whose persistence could not be explained as "misunderstandings." Anthropologist John Ogbu of the University of California at Berkeley critiqued them "from within" by pointing out that not all cultural and linguistic differences lead to school failure. For example, children from immigrant Pakistani families — whose home culture may be considered quite different from that of "mainstream" white America's — did relatively well in school, while African Americans — whose cultural experience encompasses five centuries of life in this country — continued to fail as a group. Ogbu placed the blame on a "caste-like" system of differentiation in this country, whereby black Americans encounter a "glass ceiling" that places specific limits on their desire to attain equal status — economically and socially — in the society. Recognition of these limitations imposes frustration, anger, and alienation on young black people as they grow into adolescence and realize that their options are closing down. They may try to become "white" and, hopefully, thereby gain entrance into a limited range of social and economic opportunities — for example, as professionals who never quite become the equal of their white colleagues, despite having to sacrifice some of their cultural identity. Or they may rebel in a variety of ways, including failing at school and dropping out, which

will result in their isolation and alienation from the dominant forces in the society.[14]

In light of these remarks, it is important to note that the distribution of various groups of students in American schools at the time of the founding of MCS indicated a high degree of racial segregation. Segregation applied then and, just as importantly, it still does apply in our schools. Not surprisingly, it applies in different ways to private and to public schools. Less than 3% of the student body of New York City private schools in 1966 was non-white. Recent data on the City's public schools also confirms both the multicultural and multiracial nature of the public school student population, as well as some of the racial and ethnic segregation in the schools that results from racial and ethnic divisions in the City's neighborhoods. In 1985, for example, the public school population was distributed largely among black or Latino students: 38% Black; 33.6% Latino; 22.1% White.[15] In 1991, there were 956,616 students enrolled in New York City's 984 public schools. Thirty-eight percent were classified by the New York City Board of Education as Black, 35% as Hispanic, 19% as Asian/Pacific Islander. These different groups are not always treated equally. They are often segregated from each other. For example, I work as a consultant in a primary grades school in District 9 in the South Bronx. There are no whites among the approximately 650 students who are African American, Caribbean African, Latino. Within the school, as in most public schools, many Latino children are segregated from their black peers. They are placed in bilingual programs from which their English-speaking black peers are excluded — not through official policy. Anyone can enroll in a bilingual program in the City's public schools; but in practice, segregation on this dimension is complete, at least in this school. And most recently, Jonathan Kozol revealed that not only do we still have segregated schools in the 1990s, but that these schools continue, as the Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* had noted in 1954, to be unequal in the resources allocated to them.[16]

These kinds of social conditions indicated much need for change in the mid-1960s, as they continue to in the present day. The founders of MCS were concerned about the situation of de facto segregation in the city's schools, and they saw their mission not as one of catering once again to rich folks, but rather to do something about racial segregation and, by implication, about racism in this country. This was therefore a public mission, as Director Trowbridge wrote in 1974:

> Our school . . . is private only because it is private by law. We are not allowed to start a public school. If we were . . . we would have had no interest in starting a private school. It has a public mission and, therefore, its curriculum, its entire responsibility, must be measured against the origins of public education in this country and not the origins of private education.[17]

The plans for the new school drew heavily on the "alternative" models of education in the air at the time. This would be an integrated, ungraded school: children of different ages, as well as different ethnic, cultural, racial, and class backgrounds, would work together. Teachers would act as advisers, as resources for students, who would work together on projects. The students, teachers, administrators and other staff would all be part of a community. The School itself would be the community. It would also, of course, be an institution. The two terms are not usually synonymous. The possible contradiction here was, I believe, anticipated and a balance was sought. Students would not only study real-world problemss — particularly of course the problem of

"Our school . . . has a public mission and, therefore, its curriculum, its entire responsibility, must be measured against the origins of public education in this country and not the origins of private education."

racism— but they would also be required to act upon their world in some practical way. Another echo of Emerson: "Be it how it will, do right now."[18]

Each individual child would have specific responsibilities in sustaining the school community. The child's sense of self-worth would be cultivated in having a significant participatory role in the making of that community, a role that was necessary to the well-being of the community itself.

"Direct experience" in a context of "common responsibilities" was needed to help children overcome the breakdown in dialogue between the different human groups that comprise our society.

In addition to participation in the daily communal life of the School, students would have an even closer experience of group cooperation by living together for the period of a week three times a year at the School's farm located in the Catskills about three hours from New York City:

> To children of broadly divergent racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, the farm will provide a natural setting, enabling children really to know and respect one another by living together and sharing in very real ways the responsibilities of a highly interdependent community. By offering a distinctly new learning experience to *all* children, the farm will be a strong melding force.[19]

The School was to be strategically located on East 96th Street in Manhattan, the "border" between East Harlem and Yorkville — two very different communities. East Harlem is a relatively poor community populated largely by African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and most recently by Latinos from Mexico and Central America. Yorkville, populated largely by whites, happens to include within its domain the wealthy "Carnegie Hill" section around Park, Madison, and Fifth Avenues in the Upper East Side. It is often touted as one of the richest pieces of real estate in the world. The fortuitous location of the School between these two communities, made possible by the purchase of a building, was both symbolic and practical. In this area of the city, children from a wide range of different social, cultural and class backgrounds would have ready access to the School. Alternatively, these neighborhoods would serve as places of exploration and discovery for the students, as well as locales to engage in community service of various kinds.

These principles and policies, like the "alternative" forms of schooling mentioned above, were quite solidly within a long intellectual tradition in American history, rising from Emerson and Thoreau through the American pragmatists William James and Charles Pierce and, most importantly, down to John Dewey who set forth a very comprehensive, "progressive" model of education that has had considerable influence on our schools. The *First Principles,* in fact, allude to certain of Dewey's key ideas:

> Dewey's idea of "education for democracy" is as important today as it was thirty-five years ago even though it may be considerably harder to implement in this time of specialization. It is not an uncommon insistence that the great failings of our national and international society are due largely to breakdown in dialogue, to our inability to understand our different needs and conflicting aspirations, an inability which springs not so much from any lack of tolerance but from a lack of touch. One's compassion and sensitivity toward another cannot be assured merely by the application of high moral standards; these qualities arise out of direct experience and the awarenesses which accompany common responsibilities.[20]

We have already seen that Manhattan Country School was dedicated from the outset to social change through "education for democracy." Education for democracy is needed because there has been a "breakdown in dialogue" between the different human groups that comprise our national and international societies. Abstract ideals and moral precepts cannot, by themselves, be expected to educate the young in "compassion and sensitivity" toward those who

are deemed "other." "Direct experience" in a context of "common responsibilities" is required for that. Presumably, in that kind of context, the "dialogue" that has been "broken" will be recreated. Without the opportunity for engaging in that dialogue with others, without the chance to participate in activities with others that really mean something to the well-being not only of oneself but of those others as well, in the community of a school, there can be no "education for democracy."

Interestingly, Dewey and his wife Alice Chipman Dewey founded a school in Chicago in 1896 that was intended to serve as a model of democratic education. American philosopher Cornell West describes the "Dewey School," which Alice Dewey headed as principal, as follows:

> The aim of the school was not only to serve as a model of how meaningful and enriching education could take place, but also to make a practical intervention into the national debate on education. This practical intervention was, for Dewey, a form of political activism in that the struggle over knowledge and over the means of its disposal was a struggle about power, about the conditions under which cultural capital (skills, knowledge, values) was produced, distributed, and consumed.[21]

In founding a school with these ideas in mind, Dewey's presuppositions were that the world is malleable, that human beings create their world through their transactions with one another, and that intelligent reflection and analysis can lead to changing that world where it needs changing. Dewey held a "transactional concept of intelligence." A school should be a place where children are given plenty of opportunities to enter into a world of social action in concert with others. It should be a place in which each individual child has a chance to exchange and compare with others values, ideas, knowledge, and perhaps even dreams. Only then can intelligence come into full flower. So Dewey believed.

Hence the importance Dewey placed on experience, which West shows he thought of "in terms of relations and interactions,"[22] always emphasizing the "forward-looking character of human experience"[23] as human beings worked together (or, of course, sometimes in conflict — a point Dewey deemphasized) to create the future. Along with his emphasis on the "transactional" nature of mind, and the social character of experience, Dewey also stressed the social nature of individual identity. For Dewey, one's identity was never simply that of an individual "outside" the world looking on from a distance, as it were. Rather, the individual human being was thoroughly a social being. Put in philosophical terms, consciousness and individual identity were intersubjective.

It seems to me all these ideas can be found in the *First Principles*. Dewey would have recognized the *idea* of MCS as a very American idea.

For Manhattan Country School's Director, however, these strains of progressive thought link most importantly with the political words and acts of another important American, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who had intellectual links not only to African-American roots (through, for example, his position in the black Baptist church) but also to Henry David Thoreau's classic essay *Civil Disobedience*. Thoreau had accepted a brief jail sentence for refusing to pay taxes that he said supported the imperialistic (and we might add, racist) war against Mexico in 1848. He stood on his principles, but he stood on them as an individual (Emerson and other "transcendentalist" friends put up Thoreau's bail). What Dr. King did — with, perhaps, reference to Mahatma Gandhi's anti-colonial political tactics in India — was to turn Thoreau's individualistic form of protest into a social movement. He, of course, did not do this alone. Many men and women — white as well as black — worked together to create the organizations and political clout that made the successes of the Civil Rights movement possible. While King was not particularly a creator of an original philosophy, in the vein of a Dewey, he articulated a vision so forcefully that it made an equitable, democratic and open society

seem more of a real possibility, something just over the horizon. He reinvigorated our vision of a democratic society, he raised our consciousness of racism, and he forced government to face up to its constitutional responsibilities.

> ***"A prophetic framework encourages a coalition strategy that solicits genuine solidarity with those deeply committed to antiracist struggle."***

King's vision has been realized in many of the laws of our society since his day but, as we already indicated, the actualization of that vision in our institutions, as well as in our daily life, is still in process, to say the least. For the Director of Manhattan Country School, however that vision remains very much alive. Gus Trowbridge has articulated that vision for the School in the many writings and speeches he has produced over the nearly thirty years of the School's history. It would not be too much to say that in many ways, King's voice can still be heard in those documents. And though his is not the only democratic voice in the School, it remains a significant one, which explains why one of the first things a visitor encounters on entering the School on 96th Street is a larger-than-life lithograph of King by Ben Shahn on a wall.

For Gus Trowbridge, Martin Luther King Jr.'s was, above all, a prophetic voice. He has made that clear in any number of formal and informal statements. When I first heard the term I was puzzled, for personally I saw King as very much a man of his times — both a product and a mover of history, but certainly not "outside" history, as the term "prophet" might indicate. I think everyone in the School has to confront this notion of King as a prophet. Some will say King was not the only important African-American leader of his time. Some will say it would not be helpful to put King on a pedestal and remove him from his history.

I could reach no satisfactory resolution for myself of the meaning of this characterization until reading recently an article by Cornell West in which he calls for "a new framework for black thought and method . . ., a prophetic one of moral reasoning, with its fundamental ideas of a mature black identity, coalition strategy, and black cultural democracy." For West:

> A prophetic framework encourages moral assessment of the variety of perspectives held by black people. . . . A prophetic framework encourages a coalition strategy that solicits genuine solidarity with those deeply committed to antiracist struggle. . . . A prophetic framework replaces black cultural conservatism with black cultural democracy.[24]

West contends that this "prophetic" framework would begin with such recognitions that not all black people are the same (certainly not by virtue of skin pigmentation), that there are, nevertheless, "distinct styles and dominant modes of expression found in black cultures and communities" which provide rich sources of thought and action, and that there is a need to form links with other groups also committed to the actualization of democratic principles in our institutions and daily lives. It seems valid to me to view Martin Luther King as a "prophet" of this sort of "prophetic framework," and it also seems to me that MCS can claim to be one of the institutions in our society to have worked very hard to make that framework its own.

Shared Perspectives

Diversity is undeniably an important theme in the School's multicultural program. Curriculum and instruction have, from the beginning, not only included and welcomed diversity, but have woven diversity into the fabric of the School's programs within and beyond the classroom. While one does not find the now fashionable term "multiculturalism" in the early documents of the School, it can quite truthfully be said that MCS has always had a multicultural program. And the School's approach to diversity has largely taken shape through a

history of dialogue and discussion and struggle — sometimes highly contested — which has given it an unusual authenticity and ultimately a stability based on a highly developed vision of what education should be and of the role of education in the formation of a society that we would perhaps not recognize because it would be truly democratic.

There are certainly diverse views of what multiculturalism means within Manhattan Country School. This will become obvious in the review which follows of the multicultural dimensions of the curriculum in the school. Differences of opinion and approach are not only tolerated, they are cultivated, and serious efforts have been made from the beginning to shape the institution itself in ways that can take advantage of the different experiences both children and staff bring to the community of the School. Each teacher approaches the themes of diversity and equality in a different way, with different emphases, and different ideas of what multiculturalism means to teaching practices and to the development of curriculum. Different philosophical viewpoints as to the purpose of the School's emphasis on these themes also emerge.

Perhaps the diversity of the ways different teachers in the school approach this theme could itself be considered a part of the school's educational philosophy, a philosophy that allows teachers to take up various themes of cultural, ethnic and racial diversity and create something new and exciting for — and with — their students. Yet this creative process seems to take place within a framework of assumptions that, from my own observations and discussions with teachers and administrators, seem widely shared among the faculty.

These assumptions will emerge in their specificity in the review which follows, but a few indications can be given here. First, *the curriculum at every level is in one way or another child-centered.* The student is the first and enduring source of knowledge and of study. Children, particularly in the Lower School, are encouraged to learn about their world beginning with a study of themselves and moving outward to a consideration of the relations in which they, as individuals, are centered. As students progress through their years at the School, increasing emphasis is placed on widening their knowledge and understanding of the world around them, and on realizing through "direct experience" that others not only have their "centers" in the scheme of human societies, but that all identities are mutually interdependent.

"Relations" is a key term, as well, for *each child at the School has ample opportunity to learn that he or she is a specific person with a particular identity, by virtue of the social, cultural, and ecological relations which he or she participates in* as that identity develops and grows through learning. The connectedness of people, their relations—sometimes local, sometimes global — with each other are what makes the human world what it is. This theme of connectedness, like the modulations of an improvised melody, surfaces in various ways in the work the teachers do with the children at the School.

A third theme that runs through the School's curriculum is *a willingness to let the students learn about the conflicts and struggles of some groups in American society to achieve recognition, equality and justice.* For example, slavery and the Civil Rights Movement are studied from a variety of perspectives in both the lower and upper divisions of the School. The harsh racism and other forms of injustice that permeate so much of American history and which still have strength today are not ignored or denied. Rather, students are encouraged to discuss racial and other social conflicts, to learn from them, to understand the people who are engaged in them.

But just as the reality of social conflict in its various guises in this society is acknowledged and faced in the School, so too is *the diversity of that society celebrated.* Students are given many opportunities, from the 4-

5s through to the eighth grade, to learn about the different social groups that exist in the world, in the U.S. and in New York City today. And in many cases, the diversity that exists within groups is also studied and celebrated.

Finally, another important multicultural theme that recurs through the different manifestations of the School's curriculum is *a concern with solving the problems of social conflict.* That in turn requires considerable study and analysis of those conflicts in order to understand them. At the same time, this concern provides an important component of the curriculum that one may say is ultimately the fruit of the child-centeredness of the curriculum mentioned above. Teachers work at helping children in the School develop a sense of their own ability to make a difference in the world, and at giving students skills that will continue to lead them in that direction after they graduate.

There has been an ongoing concern with creating the kind of environments within the School and its classrooms that will foster the multicultural perspective.

Some History: Institutional Change and Development

The principles and shared themes that have been sketched in the previous section might be — and sometimes were — considered rather daring, even unrealistic. Gus Trowbridge tells of some skeptics who suggested before the School opened that few, if any, whites would apply. "Don't tell me you can start a private school that's 30% Negro and get one single middle-class WASP to go to it," some people told him when he talked about starting an integrated school. The criticisms were discussed in the *First Principles* and suggestions made regarding relevant features of the new School's organization, particularly funding and tuition. Enrollment goals were set in terms, not only of racial representation, but also of social class variety. These considerations affected staffing as well, for which there was a similar goal of diversity, one not always easy to achieve.

And some of the principles, the vision, the programs and curricula fell under the critical scrutiny, from time to time, of groups of parents who gathered together as members of a particular "ethnic" or "racial" group.[25] The story of the Black Caucus of the Parent's Association will be discussed later in this chapter is illustrative of the inevitable conundrums that I believe always travel along with our attempts to "democratize" our society. The working out of the debate between some staff in the School and some concerned black parents holds many lessons for any attempts we might make to institutionalize a democratic "community" within a deeply divided society. The associated events in the years 1970-1972 raised fundamental questions about the possibilities of democratization solely through reasonable discussion.

But in fact an essential component of the founding vision of the School is the belief that open discussion and the active participation of everyone in the School community in the ongoing development of the School's educational programs are essential to what MCS is all about. As we have seen, the School stands for certain principles, a philosophy of education; but that does not mean its programs and curricula, its classroom organization and instructional methods, are frozen in place. Quite the reverse has proven true, for throughout the history of the School, the teachers and administrators have created a variety of staff development projects, focusing on issues found to be significant at particular historical moments. There has been an ongoing concern with creating the kind of environments within the School and its classrooms that will foster the multicultural perspective and the drive toward social understanding and equality that define the School's mission. A tuition reform program was worked out during the School's first decade to avoid

creating a two-tiered system in which students whose parents paid full tuition overvalued themselves as "elites," while those who were on scholarships were stigmatized as "welfare recipients."

Efforts were made, and continue to this day, to develop programs in cooperation with the public schools — to create opportunities for MCS and public school students to learn together, including learning about each other. In cooperation with other schools as well as institutions of higher education, the School has sponsored a number of conferences and workshops, such as those on multicultural education in April 1988 and January 1991, to which teachers from public schools were invited. A third conference, focusing on multiculturalism and gender issues in school and classroom, is planned for the Fall of 1993. Such conferences give staff at MCS and other educators working on similar issues a chance to learn from each other. Moreover, careful preparation for them takes place through extensive in-house workshops and study sessions that may involve a year or more of work. In them MCS teachers and administrators educate themselves, reflect on and synthesize their own experiences in the classroom.

In the next section of the report, we will look at some of these aspects of the School's history and development in order to get a better sense of the contexts within which the School does its educational work, as well as the processes involved in the development of the institution as it is today.

A Diversity of Students

The founders of MCS recognized early on that, in order to create the kind of school which, as Gus Trowbridge wrote in an article in the 1979 *MCS Newsletter*, "would exemplify the great social assertions of the Civil Rights movement, and . . . provide a design for quality integrated education which would warrant replication," attention had to be given to achieving an equitable ratio of white to black students. He continues in the same article:

> In starting MCS our first decision was that in the creation of an integrated school numbers *did* count. They could not be disregarded as was the case in other private schools, nor could they lock us into racial imbalance as was happening in the public schools. We knew that numbers were not the end objective or the only objective of racial integration, but we recognized that a strong numerical base was a crucial starting point in the achievement of integration.[26]

There was considerable discussion at the outset of what the optimal proportions of white and black students should be. The founders rejected the idea of seeking an enrollment of Blacks and Whites that would reflect the national population figure of 10-15% Blacks, since that would still leave black children in the minority. They also rejected the idea of trying to reflect regional or local population distributions, since that would contradict the goal of creating a school which would exemplify an integrated education. A school in Atlanta would have very different proportions of black and white children than one in Maine, for example. Gus Trowbridge's 1979 article continues:

> When we abandoned statistical measures, we moved to ideal, or artificial standards. We perceived that to the equation of integration must be added the element of parity. Equal presence given unequal numbers, much less equal position given an unjust society could not result from proportional representation. For groups of unequal circumstances to be placed in situations of closer equality, the numerical ratio had to approximate actual equality.

The initial goal of the School regarding the diversity of its students was to begin with a 30% student enrollment of children of color, which was twice that of any other private school in the 1960s. Figures cited in a Progress Report in 1966 shows that this goal had been accomplished:

Total student enrollment: 66

Groups: Four groups:

Nursery, Kindergarten, 1st Grade, and a combined 3rd/ 4th Grade

Percent of Negro and Puerto Rican students:	30%
Percent of students receiving some scholarship aid:	50%
Percent of students on 90% or full scholarship:	20%[27]

In the early years of the School, efforts were made to ensure that the racial balance was not grounded in an economic imbalance, with large proportions of black students from lower-income families and the majority of white students from wealthy families. Gus Trowbridge writes in the 1979 *Newsletter*:

> Subsequently we have built upon that minimal ratio adding economic variety to offset negative assumptions implied by racial correlations to wealth and poverty, and broadening ethnic diversity within the School.

In a pluralistic classroom, children are free to grow as individuals and to be judged as Martin Luther King, Jr. encouraged, not by the "color of their skin but by the content of their character."

And in 1969, enrollment broke down as follows:

White:	59%
Negro:	27%
Hispanic:	11%
Oriental:[28]	3%
Children enrolled at full tuition:	54%
Children enrolled on scholarship:	46%
Children receiving almost full tuition scholarships:	15%

The School's student population divided almost exactly into half white and half children of color. In just a few years, the School had increasingly diversified its student body. This diversity continues to be maintained to this day and may be considered to be the quantitative foundation for a qualitative condition of equality and, as Gus Trowbridge points out in the article just cited, for a pluralistic school community:

> Pluralism enables racial integration to transcend the one dimensional feature of numbers, not because numbers do not count, but because diversity prevails. Therefore, in a pluralistic classroom, children are free to grow as individuals and to be judged as Martin Luther King, Jr. encouraged, not by the "color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Diversity was maintained, but there was clearly a cost to this policy. Fewer students were on scholarships, but the change in that direction was not dramatic. It meant the School would have to raise considerable funds each year to support its diversity. Unlike most private schools, MCS did not, and could not, simply set a budget for each year and then divide the total anticipated budget by the number of anticipated enrollments, and from that set the tuition. In fact, MCS assisted more than twice the percentage of scholarship students than were generally funded by other private schools. In order to achieve annual financial goals, the Director found that one of his main annual tasks was to raise some 30-35% of the School's budget, more than double that raised by directors of comparable private schools each year.

Tuition Reform: an Institutional Change to Foster Diversity

There was an additional problem—cultural, not financial. Who were the students on financial aid? It is perhaps no surprise that they were overwhelmingly the children of color. There was concern among MCS staff that this fact would stigmatize those students as "poor," hence in some way alien or even inferior. Parent participation patterns indicated that most of the parents who participated actively in School affairs over the years were also those who paid full tuition. Parents of scholarship students tended to feel they didn't really

have the right to participate. Moreover, scholarship families were often being asked to pay 10-15% of their income, a considerable hardship for low-income families. "Unwittingly," Gus Trowbridge wrote, "we had adopted a process and a vocabulary to go with it that were patronizing and divisive":

> Though based solely on need, scholarships were nonetheless "awarded." Each scholarship contract cited a "grant-in-aid," reminding parents that they were beneficiaries. I wrote thank-you notes promptly to parents in the full tuition bracket who gave donations even though in many cases the combined tuitions and gifts of many of these families incurred less hardship than the small, adjusted fees of our scholarship families.[29]

A series of "Racial Awareness Seminars" held in the spring of 1969 revealed that

> to many White parents "Black" automatically meant "scholarship" even though several Black and Spanish-speaking families were paying full tuition and several more White families were on scholarship. Many minority group families felt in return that their reduced rate of tuition meant that they had less leverage as parents on school policies and less influence within the school community.[30]

A process began of seeking ways for families to undertake proportionally equal financial responsibilities within the School. After hundreds of hours of meetings and discussions over a period of three years, a consensus was finally arrived at. The new tuition system, put into effect in 1971, sought to "equalize" the contributions of parents at different levels of income by requiring lower-income families to pay as little as 3% of their income, and wealthier families to pay up to 10%. A maximum "required" fee was set that was comparable to tuition rates at private schools in the City. Should 10% of parents' income amount to more than the maximum, those parents were asked to pay the rest as a tax-deductible contribution. Today this system remains in place, though the percentages have changed — ranging now from 5% to 12% of income — with additional donations still asked of the wealthier families. In this way, the School can better maintain its "commitment to economic diversity [as] inseparable from its commitment to racial and ethnic pluralism."[31]

Tuition reform has played a major role in keeping MCS's student population diverse both culturally and economically. For example, in the 1987-88 year, there were 182 children enrolled, ages 4-14. There were 88 boys, 94 girls. Ethnic groups were as follows:

White:	49%
Black:	26%
Hispanic:	19%
Asian:	5.5%
Native American:	.5% (1 student)

In that same year, the financial picture was as follows:

Percent paying up to 25% of the cost per child:	4%
Percent of students paying between 26% and 50% of the cost per child:	16%
Percent paying between 51% and 75% of the cost per child:	22%
Percent of students paying between 76% and 99% of the cost per child:	27%
Percent paying full cost per child	31%[32]

A Diverse Staff

In addition to the kinds of concerns any school has regarding the hiring of teachers — their education, their experience, their pedagogical philosophy and method — MCS naturally concerns itself with attaining diversity among its staff. While this goal was not always easily met, in the 1987-88 year, of 20.5 full-time-equivalent teachers, 32% were male and 46% were of minority backgrounds. From the years 1989-90 to 1991-92, people of color constituted between 37% and 44% of the staff. In addition, during those same years, people

of color made up between 39% and 42% of the Board of Trustees.

A number of the teachers today are native Spanish speakers. Several other teachers have pursued extensive study programs in Spanish in Latin American countries, and have become fluent in that language, which is part of the curriculum for all the children throughout their years at the School.

Questions of Group Identity: A Challenge from some "Concerned Black Parents"

The School's educational program is grounded in a concern with the individual

> ***". . . a working community in which achievement, power and influence are self-earned rather than a legacy of privilege. . . ."***

as well as with community. But its concern for the group experience focuses primarily on the community of the School, rather than on whatever communities the students may represent. This can be seen in statements like the following from the *First Principles*:

> Differences among individuals will not, nor should not, disappear; rather, they will emerge as assets, hopefully ceasing to be viewed as causes for estrangement.[33]
>
> Our objective is the achievement of a constituency in which there is no given, predictable majority, a working community in which achievement, power and influence are self-earned rather than a legacy of privilege, and certainly not at the expense of others.[34]

Many of the students live in identifiable communities that are alienated from "mainstream" society — or the centers of power — and thereby exist as part of a system of inequality not just between individuals, but between individuals on the basis of the groups with which they are identified . To the extent that this is the case, the MCS "community" is different in kind than those other communities. Some, but not all, of the children find themselves crossing from one kind of arrangement of power to another — from a position of unequal status to one, at least in intention, of equality.

At the same time, because the School defines itself as an integrated school and as a model and a change agent within the general society, it is grounded in the principle that differences should be brought to the surface of the learning process to be questioned, debated, discussed, celebrated, critiqued:

> That our school must provide continuous academic and social learning related to pluralism is indisputable. Healthy self-concepts, strong racial identity and awareness, knowledge of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and a grasp of the horrendous personal, racial and institutional injustices of our past and present society: these objectives must assume paramount importance in our school's total curriculum.[35]

The School tries to come to terms with both individual and group differences. Michèle Solá suggests this produces an ongoing systemic "tension" in the School's educational program:

> Group and individual identities would both be important to nurture, despite the fact that this would not always be an easy task. They would surely be in a delicate balance and could even be in conflict with one another at times. It is in fact this tension between the individual and the social group that becomes the central focus in the first and subsequent documents.[36]

Sometimes this "tension" has manifested itself in serious and extensive debates within the School's community, debates which sometimes seemed to threaten its most basic structures, its very diversity. Such was the case of the group of parents who first referred to themselves as "concerned Black parents," and later took on the sobriquet of the "Black Caucus," and then changed to "Black and Latin Caucus,"

since Puerto Rican parents had been involved in the group from the beginning.

The fuller story of the Black Caucus needs to be told, and there are many available documents for doing that, not to mention the memories of the people who were involved with the School during the relevant years, 1970-72. But here only a brief sketch can be offered. It illustrates not only the working out of the "tension" of individual and group, but also the role of discussion in the process of developing a school based on democratic principles that will in turn be a force in democratizing the wider society.

Some parents were concerned that the Black and Puerto Rican students were not being adequately prepared to live in a racist society.

The "tension" that was most on the minds of the Black Caucus parents derived, according to their own report, from concerns that the Black and Puerto Rican students were not being adequately prepared to live in a racist society. In 1970, minutes from a meeting of the Curriculum Committee of the Parents' Association repeatedly referred to concerns about Black and Puerto Rican students:

> Are the teachers . . . prepared to effectively meet the varying interests, needs and abilities of a disparate student population. (Do they, the students, essentially become homogenized to swing with the MCS philosophy?)
>
> It would be genocidal for Black and Puerto Rican students to leave MCS ill-prepared in skills and achievement to cope and survive in a society afflicted by racism, prejudice and one that places high value on demonstrated ability, if one is to make it.
>
> The white middle-class child often makes it in spite of, or because of the way it is. (the less educated white child often does better than the educated Black child.)[37]

An interesting phenomenon: as a cross section of parents, the Curriculum Committee concerns were very similar to members of the Black Caucus (except in the area of Black Studies and Black Culture.)

Less than a month later, an addendum was added to the minutes from a Parent's Association meeting on November 17th by a group of black and Puerto Rican parents:

1. No Black and Puerto Rican Studies program has been implemented at MCS as of Sept. 1970 up to the present date. Demand was made Dec. 1, 1969.
2. A sequential, comprehensive separate Black and Puerto Rican history and culture course of study for all grades may be a more feasible and more effective method for implementing this demand.
3. Black and Puerto Rican youth need an intensive academic-skills curriculum in order to survive. Their maturation as healthy-humane beings is of equal importance for survival. Both goals are desirable and achievable concurrently.[38]

The Black Caucus — with which the Curriculum Committee agreed in most particulars, "except in the area of Black Studies and Black Culture" — was a group of black and Puerto Rican parents who began meeting in 1969. As just cited, they had made "demands" of the School to institute a Black and Puerto Rican Studies program. Those "demands" were just that, as stated in a memo "To members of BLACK CAUCUS OF MANHATTAN COUNTRY SCHOOL" as well as to the Director, staff and teachers, the chairman of the Board of Trustees, and other parents. Here are some of those demands:

1. A comprehensive Black and Puerto Rican curriculum should be implemented as soon as possible. No later than September 1970. . . .
3. Black and Puerto Rican professional consultants should be employed to assist in the development of the curriculum. . .
6. . . . the School should employ "a Black person and a Puerto Rican person as admissions officers. . . .

7. That racially and ethnically representative personnel for administrative and teaching positions be actively sought by the present Director and Board of Trustees. Fifty percent is a goal.[39]

The Black Caucus also demanded that Gus Trowbridge respond to all its demands by February 15, 1970. Before that date, he received a letter from a concerned white parent, dated February 6, 1970. Her letter opened with a small concern that, through the course of the one-and-a-half-page "note," emerges into something more major:

> A minor irritation, which I guess is an indicator of a more major concern, moves me to write you a note. It is the appearance of the stickers with the slogan "Be Black Baby" on the ground floor bulletin board and in the music room.
>
> I feel every effort should, and, of course, has been made to provide black children with a positive identity, but this particular slogan seems more senseless and a little ugly (You are, after all, black or not black, and the imperative to *be black* cannot be willed. Should the white kids *be black*, or should they feel bad because they are not?)

This is almost a classic statement of one idea about "being black": it is the color of your skin that makes it so. Surely the little signs around the school that stimulated this "minor irritation" referred to another idea of "being black," that blackness is a community of people who, through a history of oppression and exploitation, have created rich social and cultural traditions that one should be proud of.

The letter writer went on to worry about the emphasis on black culture heroes like Martin Luther King. She was "delighted" when her son "comes home with a radiant air saying he actually met someone who knew Martin Luther King! But I would like him to become acquainted with some other culture heroes — why not a discussion about Bertrand Russell . . . a picture of Bernedette (sic) Devlin, General Dayan, Indira Gandhi . . . ."

> I am sure I am over-reacting, and it has been set off by the mail from the Black Caucus . . . . To speak of black science seems as racist as when Hitler spoke of Jewish science and cleaned out his laboratories. What has happened to our pluralist ideal that we so wanted for this school?[40]

Gus Trowbridge's response to the Feb. 15 deadline was a letter dated February 13, 1970 explaining that he was not going to meet that deadline:

> This in no way is meant as an affront or a protest, although I confess I have never liked deadlines and I don't believe unilateral timetables are at all conducive to dialogue.

His letter went on to explain that staff and faculty had "given a good deal of thought to the questions raised by the Black Caucus," spending "several hours discussing the issue of a Black and Puerto Rican curriculum." He promised a response by Feb. 23rd, concluding with a positive note which was the mirror image of his complaint in the first paragraph about "unilateral timetables":

> Expression and exchange of feeling and thought are crucial to the healthy growth of our school.[41]

Gus Trowbridge met his own deadline. A six-page typed, single-spaced response to the Black Caucus dated Feb. 23rd provides both an explication of the School's general philosophy of "pluralism" and a detailed discussion, point by point, of the "demands":

> Pluralism embraces two apparently conflicting values: equality and diversity. Both values productively operate together if the separate constituents of a pluralistic community have co-equal relations. In choosing to be a part of such a community one must be able to do so without threat or need to forfeit his separate identity.[42]

He goes on to explain the importance of the "horizontal organization" of the School, an organization in which visitors to classrooms cannot easily differentiate from head teachers and assistant teachers, an organization that enables the School to be a "community," that is, "a social structure in which no part of the whole wields power

over another." He opposes the introduction of any kind of "vertical structure" in the School: "The rights of the individual or the needs of a minority must not be obscured or constrained by any hierarchical demands." Such demands restrict the freedom of individuals, and negate the "interdependence, co-equality and . . . trust" needed to "provide the right climate for a school or community that is humanized." He adds "Unilateral assertions are not conducive to dialogue."

Most of this document then turns to arguments regarding the specific demands made by the Black Caucus. Gus Trowbridge explains his idea of curriculum as "the course that one runs," meaning, for him, that we cannot lay out a course ahead of time for a student; rather the student must blaze a trail with, of course, the guidance of teachers. Certainly "curriculum" can also mean an aggregate of courses of study, including Black and Puerto Rican Studies, but "dividing learning into categories . . . is an artificial yet mechanically useful step taken by schools. A comprehensive, child-oriented, elementary school curriculum minimizes classification of learning and emphasizes the interrelationships of feelings, ideas, subjects and skills."

The curriculum should not ignore Black and Puerto Rican concerns. To the contrary:

> Healthy self-concepts, strong racial identity and awareness, knowledge of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and a grasp of the horrendous personal, racial and institutional injustices of our past and present society: these objectives must assume paramount importance in our school's total curriculum.[43]

But many questions were raised by the demands of the Black Caucus:

> To what extent should a Black and Puerto Rican curriculum be prescribed and to what extent should it be a natural curricular response to children's needs and interests? Are the purposes and needs for such a curriculum the same or different for Black and Puerto Rican children and for white children. If different, should we establish two separate courses of study? Should we isolate or separate out a focus on Black and Puerto Rican studies, or should we keep this concern a major and organic function of all curriculum areas. Should Black and Puerto Rican studies be part of a broader curriculum such as studies in *Racism, Power, Pluralism* or *Humanism*?[44]

The other demands were also answered in the letter; there was less disagreement with many of them. The School wanted to hire more black and Puerto Rican staff. The faculty was aware of the importance of black and Puerto Rican issues, as evidenced by the review of the library's collection to determine the availability of books and materials of "interracial and intercultural interest." But there was considerable disagreement, though stated with circumspection, regarding the notion of a Black and Puerto Rican Studies curriculum. The Director preferred that Black and Puerto Rican concerns emerge "naturally" from the ongoing daily discussions and learning activities of each child in the classroom. Such issues do in fact emerge, the memo noted, and are developed appropriately by teachers in their dialogues with students. This is what a "child-centered" curriculum is supposed to do.

Gus Trowbridge's long memo asked that the Black Caucus clarify its demands and lay out more specific proposals for a Black and Puerto Rican Studies curriculum. The Black Caucus replied in "A Statement from Black Caucus to Parent Association," dated March 18, 1970,

> that the Black Caucus, in the mainstream of awareness and alertness to the welfare and meaningful education of our children, makes not only demands but also commitment (sic) to bring about the necessary changes in curriculum, effective teaching, and personnel which will make MCS a significant school, well on it's (sic) way to accomplish the founders' goals.[45]

The Black Caucus felt that it "has indeed been an effective catalyst in getting the entire MCS family a little deeper into the questions":

Is that the way to run a school?

What changes might be good?

How can we do a better job?[46]

The Black Caucus also believed that "a priority item for the school is to find answers to these specific concerns of many Black and Puerto Rican parents":

1. How can my child progress more efficiently in skills areas?
2. How can the curriculum assist my child in knowing who he is and in knowing what the society is all about?
3. How can the teachers and other personnel more effectively relate to work with, teach (or be taught by) the children?[47]

The statement concluded by reaffirming the adequacy of their original demands and declined to elaborate or specify them further: "We are firm in our reasonable demands and we feel that they have been clearly stated."

The issues raised by the Black Caucus remained the topic of discussion. Some white parents sent Gus Trowbridge letters of appreciation and support for his reply to the Black Caucus' demands. The Black Caucus continued to push for its goals and to make its voice heard. At one point he replied to a letter written by a white parent who felt frustrated with the tone of some of the Parents' Association meetings in which black and Puerto Rican concerns were aired:

It's an agonizing process — and infinitely more agonizing for Black people, because we're in the midst of something we didn't personally start, but for which we cannot refuse responsibility.

My greatest satisfaction comes from the fact that we are all talking, even if hostilely. In the first year or so of the school there was a "togetherness" which in fact was probably less mutually trusting than we thought at the time. Now, perhaps, the real dialogue is beginning to open up.[48]

The debates were heated and the controversies seem to have escalated by late 1971, when what was now termed the "Black and Latin Caucus" addressed a letter of December 21st to "All Members of the Board of Trustees." This five-page, single-spaced, typed document reiterated the earlier demands and added some others, including the following:

A) A more probing evaluation and interviewing of prospective staff members to insure that they are qualified in [among other areas] racial attitudes.

B) A more probing evaluation of personnel presently employed in terms of [their qualifications and accountability] . . .

C) A more structured training and supervisory program for teachers in order that they can be helped to relate, to deal with, to teach the diverse children in an individualistic and pluralistic manner. . .

D) The implementation of a more effective initial teaching of reading program by the regular teachers of the early grades . . .

E) A re-evaluation of the independent study time allowed students. . . .

H) There should be a separate Black-Latin studies program. Necessary because of the particular history and experience of our people in a racist country. Other groups have always been presented in the curriculum. That has always been the agenda. Minimum moral obligation and reparation is to present now an intensive program for all students in the area of Black/Latin studies. Any other program is both tokenistic and also actually a weak effort to appease racists or delude a group about what's going on.

The letter concluded almost ominously:

We await your considered response and action.

Our involvement in the many vital activities of the school informs us that many parents of pluralistic pigmentation also await the response and action of the Director and Board of Trustees to these recommendations and questions.[49]

The letter was signed by the four members of the Black and Latin Caucus "Steering Committee" as well as by four officers of the Black Caucus. These parents contin-

ued to press for a Black and Latin Studies program, and they continued to manifest a concern that their children were not getting the academic skills they would need to "make it." We can safely infer that they also were dissatisfied not only with the curriculum — which to them favored ethnic groups other than the ones they identified with — but also with the staffing. It appears that they felt some teachers were not teaching skills and others did not know how to relate to black or Latino children.

In response, Gus Trowbridge prepared an extensive report "to describe what we are doing at MCS vis a vis the important concerns of the Black and Latin Caucus." It was dated January 24, 1972. He again gave detailed answers to each of the points raised by the December 21st letter from the Black Caucus. He noted that a Black Studies Curriculum Outline was prepared by staff in the spring of 1970.

He also cited passages from a letter a black parent, who was not a member of the Black Caucus, had written, also in response to their December 21st letter. This parent argued in support of a curriculum that would examine the capitalist underpinnings of racism in America, and took issue with the *Report of the Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*[50] (often referred to as the "Kerner Commission Report") in 1968 that had asserted "the main problem in America is white racism." No, this parent argued, "that's a profound fallacy and a calculated cynicism that feeds the popular facism (sic) obtaining in this country today. . . . We must all come to understand that racism is the servant in this nation, not the master." In addition, the parent stated, we must not forget that there are poor whites as well as poor blacks and Latinos, and that not all blacks and Latinos are poor. The black parent alluded to the importance of class conflict over racial conflict, the former as the source of the latter. Therefore, his argument went, it was still an open question as to whether a Black and Puerto Rican Studies program should be a *separate* part of the curriculum.

In this report, Gus Trowbridge did not respond in any other way to the repeated demand for a separate Black and Puerto Rican Studies program, nor did he specify why he quoted passages from the black parent (as well as other writers) concerned with capitalism. This issue did not resolve itself by any establishment of such a program, in fact. Not all black and Puerto Rican parents supported the Black and Latin Caucus. This may be part of the reason why no separate Black and Puerto Rican Studies program was established in the School, nor has there been any such program that singles out a particular group for "separate" attention. Instead, as will be seen in forthcoming sections, a variety of ways have been devised to give the children in the School not only the direct experience of differences among themselves, but ample opportunity to examine in some detail the histories and present circumstances of the diverse groups that make up this nation.

A Note on Other Institutional Developments

MCS has . . . frequently articulated responses to various educational reform movements that have arisen during the lifetime of the School.

The events surrounding the concerns raised by the Black and Latin Caucus in the early 1970s were not to be, as it turned out, isolated events in the history of MCS. Similar issues were raised by a number of black and Latino parents in 1978. We will not review this second series of events here, except to note that Gus Trowbridge almost resigned his position, feeling for the moment at least that this would be the only way to resolve the dispute.

In fact, MCS has periodically been involved in reexamining its commitment to equity in the light of changing historical conditions in U. S. society, and it has also frequently articulated responses to various educational reform movements that have arisen during the lifetime of the School.

Most of these developments have actually been initiated from within the institution itself. We have already noted the extensive discussions in the 1960s among staff and parents regarding tuition reform. In the 1980s the Board of Trustees took a leading role in establishing investment policies that would not depend on investments in companies linked to the economy of South Africa. The Board sponsored a one-day conference on divestment for boards and directors of other private institutions.

Similarly, late in the 1980s, all constituencies of the School undertook a yearlong reexamination of whether and to what extent the School has put into practice its goals of a democratic education. After the School was favorably evaluated by the New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS), MCS took up the recommendation to renew its commitment to its original goal of serving as a model for public education.[51] For the past few years, the School has worked in cooperation with public schools in various neighborhoods in Manhattan, including East Harlem, Yorkville, Washington Heights, and the Lower East Side.

During the past two to three years the School has also carried out efforts to examine its perspective on multicultural education, including the conferences in 1988 and 1991, and the one planned for Fall 1993.

The Gender Equity Project

A related project currently underway involves MCS staff, parents and the Board in a further examination of equity and diversity, this time from the point of view of gender equity. In 1991 a private foundation in Washington, D.C. granted funds to assist in the development and implementation of a five-year project, "Developing a Gender Equity Curriculum." This project has resulted in an extended process of discussion, debate and change at the School, all of which has the ultimate purpose of ensuring that girls and boys receive not only an equitable education, but also the kind of education that will enlighten them on their own experiences and position in society with respect to gender issues. To give a more concrete idea of what this has entailed for the MCS community, I want to review here some of the activities and discussions that took place during the first year of the project (1991-92).

Several meetings involving staff and/or parents were devoted to the theme of gender equity during the 1991-92 school year. These included six general staff meetings, one of which was conducted by Dr. Peggy McIntosh, Director of the National SEED (Seeking Equity and Diversity) Project; a Fall Staff Development Day on "Equity Revisited: Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class," conducted in October at the MCS Farm; a Spring Staff Development Day on "Implications for Constructing a Pluralistic Community: the Gay and Lesbian Family" (with researchers from Bank Street College of Education); and general faculty meetings in June on such topics as "Ourselves as Resources and Gender Equity," "Multiculturalism and Gender Equity," and "Gender and Sexuality." One of the Parents' Association's six regular meetings during the school year was conducted on "Sexism and Children's Literature," with the assistance of Dr. Suzanne Carothers of the City University of New York.

In addition to these general meetings, the foundation grant also helped support six SEED seminars over the course of the year, in which nine of the ten head teachers at the School participated, as well as eight to ten administrators, assistant teachers and specialists. Two former MCS teachers who are now working in the New York City public schools also joined this group.

Why this intense effort to consider the question of gender equity? There were indications that, while MCS students had achieved a considerable level of understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity and the devastating effects of racism in U. S. society, they were much less sophisticated when it came to gender equity. Something, it was generally agreed, needed to be done. An essay written by Carol O'Donnell,

a 7th-8th grade teacher at MCS, effectively encapsulates the feelings of many of the MCS staff:

> When I entered MCS three years ago, I was sure that I had ascended to educational heaven. White, black, Latino, and Jewish kids sit on each other's laps; rap, heavy metal, and rock are played and debated simultaneously. The same students who discuss the nuances and subtleties of race and culture with confidence and ease, who struggle hard to express and define their heritage, who embrace "other" as much as any adolescents do — these same dynamos disintegrate when it comes to discussing sexuality and gender. "Homo" is a favorite, constant taunt, along with other symptoms of wrist-bending, shrill-voiced homophobia. "Girl" is a more common insult among younger students. Macho expectations plague boys while standard "femininity" renders the most powerful girls at times powerless. For the most part, time spent outside in Central Park is strictly gender-segregated, boys playing football and girls talking. I wondered how this could be happening on the front lines of wholistic/multicultural education.[52]

Such ambivalences and contradictions reflect quite clearly and interestingly a kind of problematic that, I believe, will always be a part of the cultural "ambiance" of any school which stands firmly on the vision of equity that MCS has represented throughout its history. While within a school's community we may devise an educational philosophy and a practicing pedagogy that will make that vision a reality for the school's students, the "wider society" — whether that involves other institutions, the mass media and popular culture, or the various "traditional" cultures and ethnic groups that make up much of the general population of U. S. society — also is a strong "educational" influence. And sometimes that "education" involves instilling values, attitudes and behaviors that in fact recreate inequities. Such certainly seemed to be the case regarding MCS's students and the issue of gender; hence the need to take action. And, as has often been the case at MCS, such action had multiple dimensions involving, as already noted, the entire MCS community, and including the formation of new linkages with other institutions as well. But the focus, perhaps, of this activity during the first year might well be said to have been the staff meetings and workshops mentioned above. To get a better sense of how MCS staff responded to the questions regarding gender so well highlighted by teacher Carol O'Donnell, we might consider some of the discussions in those meetings and workshops as described in a report by the then 6th grade teacher, Amy Bauman.

Ms. Bauman notes that, in planning for the SEED seminars for the 1991-92 academic year with Carol O'Donnell, they formulated a series of themes and questions as well as a set of suggested readings for each seminar. Yet they found that "the group moved away from the readings fairly quickly. Often our initial agenda was replaced by another topic brought up by someone in the seminar." Bauman writes:

> The first few seminars were devoted to issues surrounding gender roles and identity. . . . What does it mean to be male or female? What voices do we hear when we think of our own definitions of male and female? Who were our role models? How does this sense of "I am female" or "I am male" impact the way we deal with the children in our classrooms? Do we accept certain behaviors from boys but not from girls? . . .
>
> A variety of issues became clear during the first session. We all had been fairly well indoctrinated in some traditional male and female roles. But we had also been exposed to the possibility of "otherness," of choosing less traditional paths. For every one of those choices, there was the conflict of moving towards a less accepted lifestyle. Examples of personal challenges varied from an African-American male becoming a teacher, to a white male becoming uncomfortable with the way his father's career dictated life at the dinner table, to being gay.[53]

The focus of the staff in the early SEED seminars on their own experiences and perspectives regarding gender roles moved on to a concern with the students:

> The initial discussion focused around those moments when children do something which either challenges or reinforces a stereotypical gender image (ex: boys in the block area and girls playing dress up). Grappling with the amount of appropriate interference, we agreed that we should remind children of their options . . . , but we also didn't want to dictate what they should do.[54]

Time spent by the students in Central Park, as part of the physical education program, was one focus of the discussions. This theme led to questions which in turn linked the teachers' gender experiences and consequent perceptions of boys and girls to the choices their students made regarding what the activities in the park meant to them:

> Often, starting with the 9-10s, the girls begin to drift to the outskirts of the meadow to "talk," while the boys often engage in some kind of organized physical game. Many of us confirmed this and talked about our attempts to get the girls to participate with the boys or to start their own game. At this point, one woman asked, "Why are we trying to push the girls into the meadow? Why aren't we trying to foster the boys' desire to sit down on the side and talk?" Although some advocated the need for physical activity, this woman's point was an important one. We needed to consider why we were so uncomfortable with what the girls were doing. Wasn't there a value in their choice and the skills they were developing?[55]

During the Fall Staff Development Day at the MCS Farm, these discussions were expanded to include a consideration of the relationship between the Farm curriculum, which includes components that specifically address gender issues, and the activities boys and girls choose when they are allowed options. Bauman's report continues:

> The farm curriculum explicitly challenges urban gender roles. Yet the children, particularly the upper schoolers and 9-10s, fall into a definite pattern during the less structured time — boys play ball and girls talk inside. The older kids gossip and play some kind of truth or dare-type game. We spent time talking about our own discomfort level (particularly as we watched the girls spend hours putting on make-up) and questioning whether there was anything inherently wrong with what we were seeing. Is it "OK" when girls just want to be girls . . . whatever that means? At one point a staff member said that "it should be fine if they want to dress up." But the implication for many of us who agreed with her was that it should be, but for some reason it wasn't.[56]

During the course of the 1991-92 year, Bauman notes, "the combination of the SEED seminars and the full faculty workshop set a tone of gender sensitivity throughout the school." The discussion of gender roles resulted in the staff looking at the children in a different way: "As the year progressed, we all accumulated stories of moments when we found ourselves taking a moment to think before we acted."

The discussions on gender roles expanded to include questions of sexuality. It became increasingly clear that, while teaching "tolerance and respect" were important goals, there was much more involved:

> Although our initial intention in exploring gay and lesbian themes was an attempt to combat the homophobia both Carol [O'Donnell] and I had seen in the MCS student population, my experience of putting together the morning session of the spring workshop established that the issues were farther reaching than just teaching tolerance and respect. We were going to have to look at ourselves both as individuals and as parts of an institution, and ask ourselves some very powerful questions. Would we, can we, and should we be counted as institutional supporters of the gay community? Can we welcome a child from a gay or lesbian-headed household in the same way that we do with a child of color? Can we provide an environment that celebrates the many aspects of being gay or lesbian? And finally, what can we do to support our children as some of them grapple [with] a society that will not accept them?[57]

The seminar session on "Implications for Constructing a Pluralistic Community: the

Gay and Lesbian Family" with Steve Schultz, Elaine Wickens, Rob Caramella and Sandra Chapman — all of Bank Street College — helped clarify some of these issues. Rob Caramella noted that children were in fact far more open to establishing broad definitions of family than most adults, in his experience. Steve Schultz and Elaine Wickens discussed the "pressure of secrecy that many children face," and the implicit and negative messages of deviancy that a child living with gay caretakers receives from U. S. society. Sandra Chapman presented some ways of introducing gay and lesbian themes into the curriculum, including making available age-appropriate books regarding the issues of gender and sexuality that confront children and young people in this society.

Discussions during June of 1991 brought these issues into relationship to multiculturalism. To what extent do the different ways of treating and valuing gender found among the culturally and ethnically diverse groups in society conflict or contradict each other? Bauman writes:

> The group chose to focus around the conflicts of gender equity and cultural integrity. What happens when one view of what is equitable deviates from another individual's ethnic identity? Do we have a right to criticize the other group, or even to see our own system of ideals as superior? We did not come to a consensus on these questions. Some felt that if we do not tolerate racism from one group (even if it is culturally based), we cannot accept gender inequity. Others felt that we, as outsiders, were not in a position to judge other cultures based on our own value system. Ultimately, we did seem to agree that our goal in our own classrooms should be to emphasize the existence of multiple perspectives or multiple versions.[58]

It is no wonder that the participants in the SEED seminars found it hard to resolve these latter questions and to arrive at a consensus. They are among the most profound and difficult questions that societies all around the world — not just in the United States — must find answers to, as different cultural groups are jumbled together by the powerful political and economic pressures that rumble through history, and as the different peoples of the world find — sometimes to their joy, sometimes to their dismay — that they are becoming increasingly interdependent. It is an underlying argument of this report that the different cultural groups of the world need each other. On the other hand, in order to develop the kind of cooperative and equitable society and community encompassed by such educational visions as the one that drives Manhattan Country School, cultural changes must develop that may seem drastic to those who live out the values of this or that cultural milieu. One such change that perhaps all — certainly most — of the world's cultures will need to make is a serious reconstruction of gender and sexuality, the kind of reformulation that will lead to greater equity between men and women, boys and girls. It is to the credit of the MCS staff that it was able to reach this level of awareness and to recognize this difficult problematic, as represented in their recognition of the importance of *both* gender equity and cultural identity.

The SEED seminars, whose discussions I have sketched out here with the aid of the writings of two MCS teachers, have not been the only aspects of the Gender Equity Project. For example, on the advice of Peggy McIntosh, a site visit was arranged with Judy Logan, a junior high school teacher in San Francisco. Ms. Logan has nineteen years of experience in developing and implementing a gender equity curriculum with an age group that parallels the MCS 6th, 7th and 8th grades where issues of gender and sexuality become acute for the students. Michèle Solá spent a week in San Francisco talking with Ms. Logan and gathering information about her curriculum and teaching experiences revolving around gender issues.

Other activities included the awarding of two Summer Writing Grants to MCS staff members. Dr. Helen Ross Russell, who has taught science at the School for over twenty years, was commissioned to write a

report on "Women and Science in Education." Cydelle Berlin, consultant and teacher of the Sex Education program in the Upper School was commissioned to write about "Gender and Sex Education."[59] In addition, a library of articles and books was collected for faculty and parents who wished to become better educated regarding gender issues, as well as to have access to multicultural materials specifically relevant to gender and sexual preference.

Conclusion

The School began with a vision that entailed putting democratic ideals into practice. The *First Principles* anticipated many of the obstacles that could make it difficult to put that vision into practice by instituting a new school. As we have seen, a comprehensive range of strategies was developed to "do it now," as Emerson admonished. The *First Principles*, as well as later documents produced by the School, displayed a complex and thoughtful analysis of a society where racism still prevailed but where it also appeared that racism and undemocratic structures could be replaced by a democratic "pluralism" in which, as Gus Trowbridge says in a much later document (see boxes in the previous section), "everyone is invited to the table." The result has been the creation of a School which is in many ways unique, not merely in its commitment to "education for democracy" but in its practice, as manifested in its organizational structures, policies, and, as will become evident in the next section of this report, its educational practice.

But the extensive controversies over curriculum inspired by the demands of the Black Caucus illustrate, perhaps, how some difficulties in putting ideals into practice were not anticipated. Criticism came from just those social groups who had not previously had access — as groups — to private schooling before, and who had clearly also been grossly underserved by the public schools. As some public schools were also finding out at the time, once given "entrance," Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Native Americans often turned out to have different ideas of how our institutions should be run, of the goals of those institutions, and of their daily operation. And they turned out to have some surprisingly powerful ways of expressing their "voice," ways that could alienate progressive whites. The Black Caucus events in the MCS "family" were very much "signs of the times."

The Black Caucus parents did not see themselves in basic disagreement with the democratic principles of the Manhattan Country School. Rather, they felt that the carefully worked-out policies and programs of the School did not yet give "equal access" to their children within the School itself. They also felt that the School was not giving equal preparation to live in the "real world" to black and Puerto Rican students. They believed that the School was not adequately preparing those students to "make it" in a racist society. And they conveyed their concerns in the "militant" rhetoric of black activism, a rhetoric also derived from African-American oral traditions — as was Martin Luther King's rhetoric, but with an emphasis on different strains of those traditions.

While decisions for the School were intended to be arrived at by democratic consensus, the inclusion of substantial groups of people of color in the School's "family" actually made it more difficult to achieve consensus about the curriculum and teaching methods in particular. Different cultural styles of argumentation also played a role, as the documents indicate some frustration on the part of the parties to the debate regarding how points of view were expressed. But there is probably an ampler understanding of the issues of race and class on the part of MCS staff and teachers now than was the case during its neophyte years. Perhaps the School had to pass through the fire of the Black Caucus' campaign for a Black and Puerto Rican Studies program to attain that broader perspective. Certainly it was an exercise in "putting democracy into practice." As Director Gus

Trowbridge had said early in the 1969-70 school year:

> We can take for granted only our recognition of the significance of diversity and our acceptance of pluralism as a moral and educational responsibility. Beyond that, we cannot assume that our ideal is our reality. We must continuously engage in a process of self-study and re-evaluation.[60]

The discussions and debates over curriculum in the 1969-72 period certainly show that that "process of self-study and re-evaluation" was going on. It was, in fact, already an ongoing part of the School's work. At the same time, the vision, I think, was broadened by those debates, if only because new voices were being heard.

Other developments in the School have also helped to broaden the vision as it is put into practice in the daily world of classroom and school. A number of these were cited in the previous section including, of course, the very important Gender Equity Project which is now just concluding the second year of its projected five-year plan of work. Another prominent development has been the successful recruitment of a number of excellent African-American teachers whose presence—not merely because they are African American, but because they *are* excellent and creative teachers—answers many of the concerns of the Black and Latin Caucus.

The real curriculum, as many MCS documents have asserted throughout the years, is best revealed in the everyday activities of students and teachers in classrooms, neighborhoods, the Farm, and the other environments where the dialogues of teaching and learning emerge out of shared experiences. In the next section of the report we will look more directly at this aspect of the multicultural program. This report is not based on an ethnography in which I was able to spend days and weeks and months at the School for a year or more. That may come later. For now, I have considerable data from my limited observations of daily life in the School, as well as my interviews of staff, and reviews of archival documents, as explained in the Prologue. Nevertheless, this data is perfectly sufficient to give us meaningful glimpses of the conversation that goes on within the School's community, that daily conversation by means of which the people who inhabit this community make it into what it is, create and recreate it.

Notes

1. Many of the ideas in this section come courtesy of Michele Solá by way either of personal communications or her valuable unpublished dissertation, *"You're Brown," "I'm Tan, Tannish Brown": A Bakhtinian Approach to the Ideology of Cultural Pluralism, Social Relations, and Oral Narrative Discourse,* School of Education, Boston University, 1987.

2. Augustus Trowbridge, *First Principles*, Oct. 14, 1965, unpublished ms.

3. Solá, *op cit..*, p. 55.

4. Peter Schrag, "Voices in the Classroom," *Saturday Review*, Jan. 20, 1968.

5. Erik H. Erikson, Letter to Augustus Trowbridge, Sept. 23, 1971.

6. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self Reliance," *Selected Essays,* New York: Penguin, p.175.

7. Emerson, *ibid.*, p. 176.

8. Emerson, *ibid.*, p. 178.

9. Trowbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

10. "Society is everywhere in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater." Emerson, *ibid.*, p. 178.

11. Trowbridge, *First Principles*, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

12. Solá, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

13. For example, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, in a much-publicized, and influential, study, suggested that the black family was "dysfunctional" as a result of slavery and the failures of Reconstruction to integrate black Americans into the "mainstream polity." Such families could not be expected, without federal assistance, to effectively support their children's schooling, for example by providing books and helping their children learn to read. See, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970.

14. John Ogbu, The Next Generation: an ethnography of education in an urban neighborhood, New York: Academic Press, 1974.

15. Mayor's Office, City of New York, *First Annual Report on Hispanic Concerns*, 1987.

16. Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*, New York: Crown, 1991. For example, spending per pupil per year (1986-87) was $11,372 in the nearly all-white district of Manhasset, New York, while it was $5,585 per pupil in New York City, where more than half the children are of color. He also found that in District 10 in the Bronx, a school serving primarily white children was well stocked with computers, had a staffed library, had more teachers per pupil, than another school in the South Bronx serving largely African-American and Latino children, which had no library, no full time counselors, no computers, and was housed in a former skating rink with no ventilation system and no windows.

17. Augustus Trowbridge, *Curriculum Committee Address*, 1974, unpublished ms.

18. Emerson, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

19. Trowbridge, *First Principles*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

20. Trowbridge, *First Principles*, p. 11.

21. Cornell West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, p. 84.

22. West, *ibid.*, p. 74.

23. West, *ibid.*, p. 90.

24. Cornell West, "Black Leadership and the Pitfalls of Racial Reasoning," in Toni Morrison, (ed.), *Race-ing Justice, Engendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*, New York: Pantheon, pp. 396-398.

25. West, ibid., p. 397, differentiates "racial" and "ethnic" modes of black identity:

> Blackness is understood to be either the perennial possibility of white-supremacists abuse or the distinct styles and dominant modes of expression found in black cultures and communities.

26. Augustus Trowbridge, "From the Director," *MCS Newsletter*, 1979.

27. Augustus Trowbridge, Progress Report, October 17, 1966.

28. The terms "Negro," instead of "Black" or "African American," and "Oriental," instead of "Asian American" are used at this point in the report only because they reflect the terminology of the documents and periods of the dates cited.

29. Augustus Trowbridge, "A cost-accounting of values," *Parents League Review*, IX, 1975.

30. Trowbridge, *ibid.*

31. F. Roosevelt, "The Tuition Reform Project at Manhattan Country School," in F. Roosevelt and T. Vitullo-Martin (eds.), *Tuition Reform for Private Schools: The Manhattan Country School Plan*, New

York: Manhattan Country School, pp. 7-22.

32. Manhattan Country School, *Evaluation Report* to the New York State Association of Independent Schools, August, 1988, p. 106.

33. Trowbridge, *ibid.*, p. 20.

34. MCS Brochure, undated, p. 4.

35. Augustus Trowbridge, Memo: *To Members of the Black Caucus at Manhattan Country School, Feb. 23,* Fall 1970

36. Solá, op. cit., p. 59.

37. Minutes of Curriculum Committee meeting, October 28, 1970.

38. Minutes of Curriculum Committee meeting, November 17, 1970.

39. Memo of Dec. 1, 1969, Black Caucus Planning Committee.

40. Letter of a concerned parent to Augustus Trowbridge, Feb. 6, 1970.

41. Letter of Augustus Trowbridge to Leila Svitzer, Feb. 13, 1970.

42. Augustus Trowbridge, memo "To Members of the Black Caucus of the Manhattan Country School, Feb. 23, 1970, p. 4.

43. *Ibid*, p. 4.

44. *Ibid*. p. 4.

45. "A Statement from Black Caucus to Parent Association," March 18, 1970.

46. *Ibid*.

47. *Ibid*.

48. Letter of Augustus Trowbridge to Mrs. Charles Dean, March 16, 1970.

49. Letter of Black and Latin Caucus to "All Members of the Board of Trustees of Manhattan Country School," Dec. 21, 1971.

50. U. S. Advisory Commission on Civiul Disorders, *Report of the Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders,* New York: Bantam Books, 1968.

51. This report is merely one way of fulfilling this goal.

52. Carol O'Donnell, "When Martin Luther King Meets *Heather Has Two Mommies*: Endeavoring at Manhattan Country School, ms., 1992.

53. Amy Bauman, "An Examination of Gender Equity at Manhattan Country School, 1991-1992," ms., 1992.

54. *Ibid*.

55. *Ibid*.

56. *Ibid*.

57. *Ibid*.

58. *Ibid*.

59. Helen Ross Russell, "Women and Science in Education," Manhattan Country School, Sept. 1992; Cydelle Berlin, "Gender and Sex Education," Manhattan Country School, Sept. 1992.

60. Augustus Trowbridge, *Progress Report*, Fall, 1969.

Manhattan Country School

A Brief Overview

In the next three chapters we will look at each of the classrooms, beginning with those of the Lower School in Chapter Three, continuing with the Upper School in Chapter Four, and concluding with a description of some of the Special Programs which are particularly relevant to our theme of diversity and multiculturalism in Chapter Five. Before doing so, however, it will be useful at this point to review some general information about the School.

Manhattan Country School is located on East 96th Street in Manhattan, close to Central Park. Ninety-sixth Street is a strategic location that was deliberately chosen by the School's founders because it is on the "border" between two highly distinct neighborhoods. To the south—particularly along Fifth Avenue, Park Avenue and Madison Avenue which run north-south — down into the midtown area around 47th-48th Streets, we find one of the wealthiest areas in the U. S. with a predominately white, upper-middle-class, professional, or wealthy population. Above 96th Street to the north, we find East Harlem, one of the poorest sections of New York City, populated largely by working-class Blacks and Latinos. Much of East Harlem,

once a working-class Irish and Italian neighborhood, is now populated by Puerto Ricans who know the area as "El Barrio."

The School's location is strategic in that diverse neighborhoods are readily available for study and exploration by the students, and for community service. For example, students may work for the Yorkville Common Pantry, visit senior citizens at a local center, do volunteer work for the Central Park Conservancy, or become involved in recycling and pollution control projects in the neighborhoods around the School. All students study Spanish throughout their careers at MCS. As noted in an informational brochure published by MCS, "the school considers it important that children understand not only the Spanish language but also the racial, political and religious diversity of the contemporary Hispanic world and some of the history behind that diversity."

MCS enrolls about 185 students, dividing them into two general groups: an Upper School, which consists of the 5th through 8th grades, with one class at each grade level; and a Lower School, also consisting of one class each of children, aged 4-5, 5-6, 6-7, 7-8, 8-9, and 9-10. As each child enters MCS for the first time, an assessment is made regarding the best possible placement for the child. For example, a five-year-old may be placed in either the 4-5s class or the 5-6s class, depending on which class would most benefit the child.

In addition to placing each child in a specific classroom, the School also provides many special programs that are not specific to one classroom or another, but rather serve all the students. They include library, Spanish, music, physical education, shop, art, and, of course, the School's Farm in the Catskills.

Upper School students, grouped by grade level, find that their program becomes increasingly departmentalized according to academic subject. Fifth and sixth graders study English, history and math with their head teacher, but go to other classrooms for library, Spanish, science, art, music, shop and physical education which are taught by specialists. In 7th and 8th grades, students are divided into two mixed-grade homerooms. Each student has an academic advisor who also teachers one or more of the academic subjects. Classes in these grades are completely departmentalized by subject

area. English, history, science, and most electives are taught to mixed groups of 7th and 8th graders. Math and Spanish are taught to half groups of 7th or 8th graders.

Assessments are made periodically of each child in the school by the child's teachers. Parents attend conferences with their child's head teacher or advisor three times a year to discuss the child's needs, abilities and development. A Final Progress Report is compiled for each student with the composite narrative assessments of the head teacher and specialists. This Report is sent to parents before the final parent-teacher conference at the end of the school year.

For students in the 5th and 6th grades, periodic evaluations of effort are introduced. There are three marking periods during the school year. At the end of each marking period, students receive effort marks rather than conventional letter grades. This is a narrative account that considers each child's approach to academic work and other school responsibilities, rather than ranking each child with respect to the others. A student who finds math easy, for example, may receive a mark indicating he or she could be working much harder with more challenging material. On the other hand, a student who struggles with the subject but works hard at it will receive recognition.

Seventh and eighth grade students are evaluated on the basis of both effort and achievement in their academic and elective courses, as well as their Farm requirements. Faculty meet to discuss each child's progress at the end of each of four marking periods. Progress Reports are written up for each student and mailed to their homes. These Progress Reports are reviewed in the parent-teacher conferences.

In addition to these faculty assessments of each child, all children annually take a standardized, nationally-normed test, the Stanford Achievement Test, beginning with those who would be classified as third-graders. Over the past ten years, the students as a group have scored two to three grade levels above the national norms in Reading and Math.

An Excerpt From My Field Notes[1]

On one of my visits to MCS to gather information for this report, I find myself in the 7-8s class at about 9:00 a.m. There are children working in small groups at three separate tables in the room. They are creating books as part of their Family Study curriculum.

Sally is drawing what she tells me was a ballerina on the back cover of her book. Karl is drawing pictures of the people in his family and commenting on his drawing to the child next to him. The assistant teacher, Valerie, helps some of the children, giving them copies of the family trees they have drawn for each of their own families.

Donald is writing a speech he will present to the class about his family. He asks Valerie how to spell "sort of" but she says, "Don't worry about spelling now," and he writes on without stalling over this phrase. Valerie places tags with each child's name on a large wall map of the world to show where the children's families came from and the paths they took to reach where they live now.

I look over Janina's shoulder as she writes sentence after sentence about her father in the book she is creating. I don't see any topic sentences in her separate paragraphs, but there is a lot of information about where he lived, what his favorite places were, the names of his brothers and sisters, the strange things he ate ("bee bees, cleanser) when he was a toddler.

The cover of Karl's book depicts his grandmother, his father as a baby, the house his father grew up in, and a cat with yellow and black stripes. Karl says he forgot they had birds too, so he adds a birdhouse on a pole. Valerie is leaning over Donald, helping him as he writes his speech.

At another table children are making final, polished drafts from rough drafts of the family biographies they have written. I listen to the children talking with each other as they write. "Do you like to write?" I ask one girl.

"Well, it's sort of boring making a final draft like this," she comments," but when I have to write, I like to tell a story about leaves and trees and flowers. Then it's fun."

"Was writing your biography hard or fun? Or maybe it was both?"

"Well, writing the rough draft was easy, but it's kinda hard doing the final draft."

The children have lists of "hard words," for example, "between" — which Valerie writes for Julius on a piece of paper. She helps him straighten out a sentence about being born "a year and 10 days before his sister." He had been struggling with the problem of encoding the temporal concept correctly in written language. The girl next to where I'm sitting wants to know, "Is baseball one word or two words?"

Clea comments to Alice, the girl sitting next to her, as they work on their final drafts, "You've never heard the story of the hoagie sandwich."

"What's the story of the hoagie sandwich?" Alice asks, as she keeps working on her final draft.

"My father was eating a hoagie sandwich and just as he was gonna take a bite the foghorn blew and he threw the hoagie sandwich up in the air and all the roast beef and tomatoes and everything came raining down all over him."

"Oh, yuk!" comments Alice, and they both laugh.

The little things that happen from moment to moment in classrooms and other places in the School's community: these are the materials out of which the School's culture is recreated each day. Even apparently insignificant little incidents may hint at the larger stories behind the immediately visible events of the daily lifeworld of classroom and school.

Each child, each teacher, each staff person in an institution like MCS has a story, and it is the stories that give meaning to our lives. But the stories are not the brainchildren of isolated individuals; they are created by people cooperating together, talking with each other, writing, working together, playing together. This is what "community" entails: it is never the creation of one person only, nor can it ever be merely the entailed logical outcome of a train of thought, no matter how intricate and well-organized: it only comes about through cooperative participation.

That is what these little anecdotes tell me about MCS: how community and the consequent culture of the School are created through the participation of each person — child, teacher, staff — in the School. This is, for me, where the real life of any school is, in the daily, moment-by-moment play of speech and act as people create a world while responding to the world they — and others — have created. The hoagie sandwich tells much about "who children are," about "what is important to children," about "how children learn," about how conversation is made to carry multiple meanings, and about how free and comfortable children feel in this class to talk, even in the presence of a stranger.

February 12, 1992

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1. Students names are pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Chapter Three
The Lower School

Overview

Children in the Lower School do not become involved in the concentrated study of particular cultural, ethnic or racial groups until they reach the 8-9s class where they study Native Americans, Vikings and other peoples. Does that mean "multicultural" dimensions of the curriculum do not reveal themselves before then? Hardly. In fact, the theme of cultural diversity appears in various subtle guises right from the beginning of the child's career at MCS.

The early years at MCS provide important and necessary supports for multiculturalism by preparing each child for those ever more extensive explorations into the territory of human diversity in their world that come in the later years. One could say that the child plays a particularly important role in these early years, for, at

this stage in their lives, they are just beginning to make sense of the world beyond their own families and homes.

Children at this age need considerable emotional and intellectual support. School becomes their first experience of living within an institutional environment. They need to share their new experience of the world with their peers. They need adults to help them learn how to work cooperatively with others, how to take responsibility for themselves, how to appreciate other people. They need concrete experiences which will lead them to new understandings of their relationship to others and to the world around them. The early years of the Lower School curriculum satisfy these needs.

"What's important about the environment is that each child has a voice."

Considerable care is given to creating an environment that meets the needs of the young children. Teachers work with the children to create a context that encourages each child's self-expression, that helps each child discover his or her own voice, and that leads each child towards hearing the voices of others.

"What's important about the environment is that each child has a voice," the Lower School Director noted in a recent interview, "and that they learn they have a voice. Unless they can share who they are, I don't think they can go on to listen to who everyone else is. With the very youngest children, you're creating an environment where they feel open to expressing themselves about who they are, in whatever form that might take."

What is offered to the children is frequently unsafe subject matter"

So a context is created in which each child develops a personal voice that takes on its own meaning with respect to the other voices in that context. As will become clear in our description of each classroom's curriculum, this context is continually expanding throughout those early years. While it begins with the most direct and concrete experiences with each other and their teachers in the classroom, it quickly expands in both time and space.

Opportunities are created for the children to explore families and homes, then to investigate the School's own culturally diverse neighborhood, the City itself, and beyond. As they proceed through the different classroom levels in the School they also move through time, first studying and comparing the histories of their own parents and grandparents, then moving on in the 8-9s to the study of other peoples in both the present and the past. At each stage of this ongoing process, that personal voice, so attended to in the early years in all its concreteness for the child, is led to discover and reflect upon its relationships to the many voices that have expressed themselves in the past and to those that can be heard today.

This process of development supports the children in reflecting, posing questions, and participating in the learning process. Rather than "depositing" information in their minds and then asking questions which really only intend to get children to parrot back what has been drilled into them, children from the beginning at MCS are frequently asked, "Well, what do *you* think?"

"It's not, 'Here's the information, so what's the answer,'" the Upper School Director noted in the same interview. "What is offered to the children is frequently *unsafe* subject matter" — information that may be controversial, information that reveals a world where often there are no simple answers. "Teachers are always pushing critical thinking," she pointed out. "There's a tremendous emphasis on saying, 'Draw conclusions based on this information.'"[1]

In the early years, then, children become used to being challenged in a variety of ways. They become well-practiced in formulating their own reactions to the world

that is opening up before them, and in sharing and comparing those reactions with others. They learn how to take part in discussions, how to explore what interests them, how to connect with the diversity of the world around them, how to raise questions about that world, how to interpret its meaning for themselves and how to understand the experiences of others.

Helping children develop their intellectual curiosity and critical thinking skills is important, but it is not the only goal of the MCS curriculum. MCS encourages the social and emotional development of children equally with their intellectual development, particularly as these three factors relate to multiculturalism.

It is impossible to learn very much about the diversity of human societies without eventually becoming aware of the problems of injustice, exploitation, victimization, and conflict that have plagued human societies. Children at MCS often become angry when they first learn about these human problems. They experience some of the feelings of helplessness that oppressed groups have also acutely felt. They experience some of the frustration those groups have felt in trying to make the world a better place.

Having an opportunity to experience active participation in your own community is . . . important.

These feelings of anger, frustration and helplessness should be considered an important part of the multicultural program at MCS. Yet the School does not leave the children trapped by these feelings but seeks ways to help children learn from them and transcend them, and even to put them to good use. Of course you can tell children: well, that's how this or the other group overcame their victimization. For example, children at MCS learn about the Civil Rights Movement. They learn how "ordinary" people got together, organized, overcame at least some of their oppression, and changed the society they lived in.

One of the most important ways for children to transcend the feelings of frustration, anger and helplessness that often come with this knowledge is to realize the strength of community to overcome those problems. Learning about other communities helps. Having an opportunity to *experience* active participation in your own community is just as important. To feel that you are part of a community, certainly, you must feel that you are important to it — that your presence, your voice, your actions have meaning, and make a difference to others.

That is what MCS seeks to provide young children by creating opportunities for them to participate in the community. Children have job responsibilities in their classrooms, but in addition they also are integrated as early as possible into the day-to-day operation of the School itself. From the 6-7s on, children are given responsibilities for carrying out specific aspects of that operation. For example, the 6-7s collect daily attendance records from each classroom and bring them to the office. When messengers are needed within the School, the 7-8s are called on. The 8-9s run the school store which opens once a week to sell school supplies. The 9-10s reach beyond the School itself to participate in community services, such as the Yorkville Pantry which serves meals to the homeless. These forms of participation, of course, continue right through the eighth grade.

Through such activities, children at MCS can experience firsthand what it is like to be part of a community, including having responsibilities within that community. They are provided with experiences in which they must work cooperatively with others and in which they must take some responsibility for the working of the School itself, where what they do matters because, if they were not to do it, it would not get done.

The 4-5s Classroom

In the 4-5s classroom "the children are using themselves as `curriculum material'," according to the Lower School Director. With the teacher as a guide, the children learn to use themselves as a source of knowledge and focus of study. Through talking to one another and sharing experiences, they begin to learn who they are in relation to each other, to their families, and to their school. They create and study pictures of themselves, they introduce their families to each other, they may bring to the School their younger siblings and their parents or guardians. They begin to look beyond their first impressions of one another.

By the time the 4-5s begin making visits to each others' homes — which is the culmination of the year of study in the Spring — they already know a lot about one another. The Lower School Director notes:

> In the visits to the homes, each child gets an opportunity to tell the others, "This is what's important to me. This is why I talk about my family in this way. These are the things and the people I care about." So the children share in a very concrete fashion the importance of home, and who they are, what values they have, what artifacts are important to them in their home.
>
> They find out what toys they each have at home, whether they use the same kind of toothpaste, what games they like to play, who the other people are in the home, and what they're like. They take opportunities to find out not only about their diversity, but about what they hold in common as well.

In these ways, this first year at MCS becomes the foundation for the children's other studies throughout their career at the School. "Their experiences in the 4-5s classroom and each other's homes are something that they will look back on and use through the rest of their years in the School," the Lower School Director observes. They have gained knowledge grounded on a variety of concrete personal experiences which will serve them as they encounter the ever-widening circles of relationships that form the context of their own growing sense of who they are.

The 5-6s Classroom

The study of relationships expands in the 5-6s to an examination of the School's neighborhood, in which they learn about the diversity it has to offer. The children take field trips around the neighborhood, visiting stores and restaurants, talking with people, and finding out who does the work that keeps things going. The children interview cooks in some of the different restaurants in the neighborhood and ask about how they cook different foods.

The 5-6s are introduced to the diversity of languages . . . but also through the study of American Sign Language and of Spanish.

The children also interview everyone on the staff at the School, learning what each person's job and responsibilities are, discovering the importance of each job — whether it be the Director, office staff, other teachers, workers in the kitchen, maintenance persons, etc. From this face-to-face contact, the children get a clearer sense of how the School works and all the different people who make it work. This contact gives them direct experience, incidentally, with the cultural diversity of the School since the staff is itself diverse.

This study of the School community reflects back on their own classroom. The children begin to see the need for taking on jobs in their own classroom to make it run smoothly. They talk about what jobs need to be done and how to organize them. They discover the need for a job chart and draw one up with the teacher's help. Each child takes on a particular responsibility for making the classroom work. They begin to see that they, too, are members of a little society in the classroom that only works if

each person cooperates and makes a contribution.

Any anthropologist will tell us that language is perhaps the most fundamental aspect of human culture, as it makes possible the communication without which there could be neither a society nor a culture. The variety of languages in the world reflects the diverse cultures humans have created. The 5-6s are introduced to the diversity of languages, not only through their discussions and writing in English, but also through the study of American Sign Language and of Spanish.

What are some of the different ways people communicate? What can we learn about people and their culture by looking at their languages and the ways they communicate? Such questions are behind the 5-6s teacher's strategies for working with English, Spanish, and American Sign Language (ASL), the language of deaf Americans, in her classroom to introduce children to fruitful new ways of exploring and experiencing diversity.

From the perspective of culture and communication, ASL is intrinsically interesting, for it is a language that is wholly visual making it rather different than most of the languages of the world which use the voice to transmit messages. The very word "speech" is almost synonymous with spoken language. ASL is much more than a "translation" of spoken English into "gestures." In many ways it is more different from English than Chinese or Arabic are. It has its own forms and structures as well as a history quite separate from the history of the English language.

ASL grew and developed as the natural means of communication for the deaf community, making possible the creation of a culture within American society which was, for decades, invisible to most Americans. ASL is considered by many deaf Americans to be the core of that culture, sometimes referred to as "deaf culture," which has its own distinctive features. Deaf people have said that because of its visual basis, ASL is more "immediate," more "concrete," more "physical," more expressive of feeling than spoken languages. It certainly seems that way when one watches native signers converse. In any case, those terms express values that are widely shared in American deaf communities. Another cultural feature is the high value signing members of the deaf community place on their language itself. To learn some ASL signs and to see native signers using ASL is already to learn something about that community.

The 5-6s become aware of ASL through several different means. The teacher teaches them the hand alphabet of American Sign Language. The children learn signs for objects in the room or for what they see on their field trips. They learn the signs for the different parts of the daily schedule and use these when they go over the schedule at the beginning of each day. Spanish is given similar attention, and whenever possible, the teacher combines signs with Spanish. Again, the emphasis in these early school years is on creating contexts where the children can have the direct, concrete experiences they need, experiences which give them material for continued exploration, discussion and reflection.

"I try to combine Spanish and American Sign Language whenever I can," the head teacher notes, "because for these children, the physical experience of having the word in your hand, and having it in Spanish in your head makes it stay with them."

One serendipitous outcome of this exploration of different languages is that the children begin to talk about the different ways people have of communicating with each other. Who uses American Sign Language? Why do the deaf want their own language? Who speaks Spanish in this country? Where did they come from?

Teachers encourage these questions and help children find some answers. The children read stories about deaf signers, and they experience firsthand what signing is like through attendance at theater performances of deaf theater and dance and

through visits by deaf signing performers to the School.

Who speaks Spanish? The Spanish teacher, of course. And usually some of the children in the classroom. The Spanish teacher, one of the specialist teachers at MCS, complements the 5-6s curriculum with a variety of materials and activities which lead children to a more familiar, comfortable relationship with the Spanish language (see the later section of this report on Special Programs for discussion of the Spanish program). But the 5-6s have the added benefit of a Spanish speaker in their own teacher, who has become fluent in the language as well, after several years of study and practice in Mexico and Central American countries.

In addition to these explorations of cultural diversity through language, the 5-6s teacher added activities in the 1991-92 year that extended the introductions they had made to each others' families in the 4-5s classroom. The children made timelines based on their own lives and families. They wrote autobiographies and used these as a way of sharing what is unique and special to themselves with each other.

Discussions are held about particular concerns the children themselves bring to the School. The very diversity of the classroom makes discussions of racial, ethnic, cultural and other differences a natural topic, one they choose themselves.

Fortuitously, in the 1991-92 year one child was participating in the making of a movie about Malcolm X. Sharing his experiences led to discussions of skin color and hair texture, and whether these differences can affect the way people treat each other. "Will someone not like me because I'm black?" "Will someone treat me unfairly because of my skin color?" "What does it mean if my father is white and my mother Chinese?" "What does it mean to have skin that is lighter (or darker) than my teacher's?" These are some of the questions that children themselves bring up and that, with the teacher facilitating, become topics for classroom discussion.

To help the class further develop the discussion of skin color, the Lower School science specialist came in and held a discussion about melanin and its relation to the sun. Discussion of the movie led to talk about Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott, and about Malcolm X and other important African Americans.

The 6-7s Classroom

These discussions of racial and other differences continue in the 6-7s classroom. For example, during the 1991-92 year one child said to another that he would like to marry her when they get older. "No, you can't," another child responded. "You're white and she's black." Other children chimed in, "No, that's not right! We know people who have one white and one black parent."

In this classroom, the field of study is widened further to embrace the city of New York itself. Because the city is so vast, the topic has to be broken down into manageable parts. The teacher of this group says, "I prefer to study a few things in depth, rather than attempt to cover too much."

In many schools, even with this concern, teachers would select a few themes or topics about the city and then assign them to children to work on. At MCS the approach is different. The children themselves are asked what they would like to know about the city and to discuss this with their teacher and classmates. One result is, of course, that each year the specific topics of interest will vary (the specific sites for field trips will also change), reflecting the School's philosophy of openness to children's natural curiosity, of encouraging children to generate their own questions, and of providing a context in which they can explore these questions, share them with each other, and develop their own point of view on them.

In exploring the city, the children begin by starting where they have left off as members of the 5-6s the previous year,

with a study of the immediate neighborhood of the School.

Children are often particularly interested in the physical aspects of Manhattan. They show an interest in the subways, the bridges, transportation. The teacher adds her own questions to the discussion: "Who are the people who live in New York City?" "Who lives in what neighborhoods?" She offers field trips to La Marqueta, El Museo del Barrio, the local police and fire stations, and the bus depot in East Harlem. Here the focus becomes: "Who lives here? Who works here? How do they live?"

The 6-7s children explore the city environment, using field trips, building with blocks, reading, and other ways.

When the children return to their classroom after trips like these, the block area of the classroom often comes into play. "Central to our study is work in the block area," the 6-7s teacher notes in the 1991-92 year's curriculum letter to parents. She continues:

Building with blocks gives each child an opportunity to express ideas about urban life in concrete form. After a trip, children often reproduce what they've seen — a bridge, skyscraper, park or subway station. At the end of the year, the 6-7s work together to build an entire city in blocks. Through this project and the discussions and trips preceding it, the group develops an understanding of some of the important needs of people living in a city.

And this block-building, we might add, develops the children's understanding, through direct, hands-on experience, of what it is like to work together cooperatively in their own classroom community.

Many of the children's homework assignments and discussions center around New York City. The teacher encourages children to think about issues that come up during the year — homelessness, ethnic conflicts, events in public life.

The year Mayor Dinkins was inaugurated, the children happened to show a lot of interest in homeless people whom they see everyday all around the city. "What can we do about it?" "Why isn't someone doing more?" They wrote to the new Mayor, welcoming him as the city's first African-American mayor and expressing their concern for the homeless. Such discussions can easily lead to other questions that concern the children, such as, "Why haven't there ever been any women presidents?"

Literature in a variety of forms broadens the exploration of the city and its people. They read a range of books during the rest of the year which deal with children growing up in different cultures, such as *Annie and the Old One, Yagua Days, A Chair for my Mother, Anansi the Spider,* and *How My Parents Learned to Eat.*

During the 1991-92 year students learned about Martin Luther King and the Montgomery bus boycott. They read from various biographies of Martin Luther King, not just one single book. In this way, they got to see different points of view on the man and the Civil Rights Movement. They discussed, compared and evaluated these different perspectives. They sang Freedom songs and heard stories about the Montgomery bus boycott and other events of the Movement.

"The children got *very* fired up about the boycott," the teacher reports. They made "buses" and "bus stops" out of blocks in the block area of the classroom and staged a "boycott."

After three days of this experience, the children became so involved that they started boycotting each other. The girls boycotted the boys. Enthusiasm ran so high that children began to carry over their "pretend" political conflicts into their own relationships in the classroom. Some of the girls began to explore the word itself, changing it to "girlcott" in "protest" against what they saw as "unfair." Other children wanted to form clubs, but when the teacher pointed out that would mean excluding

some of the other children, a few girls began chanting "Girlcott the clubs!"

This anecdote illustrates nicely just how the early years at MCS are designed to prepare children to engage the world around them, to challenge and question it, to get "stirred up," to be willing to show what is important to them, to show what they care about.

The teacher seized this opportunity to step in and got the children to discuss what they meant by "unfairness," and how best to deal with it. "You want them to see that you value them standing up for what they believe in, making social change," she explains. "But at each level they may get over their heads, and you have to help them to figure out *how* they're going to go about boycotting, what it means to conduct a boycott."

We are amused at these inventions of young children. Perhaps they remind us of our own fond enthusiasms of our salad days. But we sometimes rightly stand amazed, too, to discover the intensity that even very young children can bring to *their* analysis, to *their* study of the world and society.

Another anecdote illustrates how the very makeup of the student body creates opportunities for learning about different cultures and peoples. When a Japanese boy came into this classroom a few years ago — his first experience in an American school — children observed him staring at some of them with intense curiosity, touching their hair. He was particularly fascinated by the African-American children's hair. Some of the children thought he was rude. "Who is this person?" the teacher reports them asking.

This opened up an opportunity to discuss where the new child was from, why he seemed so curious about the other children's physical characteristics, how he had little opportunity to observe people of African ancestry in Japan, etc. He also brought his chopsticks to school, arousing the children's curiosity in him and his culture. Everyone wanted to try using chopsticks. The child's mother then came to class and taught the children origami and answered questions the children had about Japan.

The 7-8s Classroom

In the 7-8s classroom, one curriculum, the Family Study, plays a major role in the children's multicultural education. Over a period of several months of activities revolving around the study of their own and each other's families, the children begin to explore different ways of recording and representing history. They continue, as they have in earlier years, to focus on their own families through discussions, painting, and other activities. But in recent years, writing has become a major component of this process of exploration — "writing," the teacher says, "of how they `translate' their family's past, their family's experience, their family's culture to the other members of the group."

In this way, the learning environment expands backward in time. It takes on a historical dimension. The children begin to see how their own families are a part of the history of our society. They trace the global routes by means of which their families came to North America and to New York.

The teacher asks the children to generate their own questions about families in class discussions (see box, next page).

The children use their questions to interview each other about their own life histories. They write down answers on interview forms and use the information they have gleaned from each other to write biographies of each other. These biographies are shared in class discussions and the children create books out of them which they can reread as they continue their investigation of families.

The children then revise the questions they have used in their interviews of each other. Together they construct another interview, this time to be used to interview

Children generate their own questions in the Family Study conducted in the 7-8s classroom

- **What do we want to know about our families?**
- **How can we learn more?**
- **What do you like about families?**
- **What do you dislike?**
- **How did you get your name?**
- **Is there something special about your name?**
- **Do any of your relatives have the same name?**
- **Where did your family come from?**
- **What is a family, anyway?**
- **What does a family have to have in order to be a family?**

parents. They also write letters to grandparents, seeking more information about the origins of their families. An interview the children designed during the 1991-92 school year asks:

> Where were you born?
> What languages do you speak?
> Describe a typical day at school when you were a kid.
> What did you do for fun?
> Teach me a game or song from when you were young.
> If the interviewee is an immigrant, ask them: When did you come to America?
> What was the hardest thing to adjust to in America?

The children interview their parents, recording answers on their questionnaires. Parents come to the classroom to tell stories about their own childhoods. They may share memories associated with a treasured memento they bring to class to show the children. They may tell about a favorite food or sing a remembered childhood song to the class. Each child takes all this information and composes a biography of one parent, publishing it in book form.

In "Dear Grandpa: For My Homework I Need to Interview You," an article in an MCS Newsletter, Marty Trowbridge wrote about the children's excitement as they began to receive responses to the letters they sent to their grandparents:

> As letters arrive, I hear voices on the stairs exclaiming, "Look! The grandparents are writing us back!" These letters are read aloud in meetings and the information in them becomes the topic of conversation and the basis for charts and exhibits around the room. Grandparents write, "I was born in Brooklyn . . . Puerto Rico . . . Georgia . . . England." And, "We learned Spanish and English in school," or "Our language was British English in school, but Hindi was our cultural language."

Here are some other snippets from grandparents' letters:

My chores were walking the dog, making my bed, drying the dishes, ironing my middy blouses.

I lived on East Broadway, and the trolley cars used to pass right by my home. In winter we used to go sleigh riding in the park on Essex Street.

We played hide and seek, jumped rope and built bird houses. I never was any good at marbles, but I liked to spin tops and play mumbley-peg with my jackknife.

At that time there was no radio or TV.

"It would be meaningless for the 7-8s to hear a stranger tell them about what it was like in 1940, but they can understand that their grandparent didn't grow up with television or Nintendo," the teacher explained.

As part of the Family Study project, each student paints a self-portrait, the final version of which is the result of several "drafts" in the form of drawings done in pencil or felt-tip pen. The portraits give students a way of representing themselves to others, which in turn provides each child an opportunity to look at him- or herself in the light of that representation. In previous years, the children had been particularly interested in the technical aspects of painting. And two years ago, he noted, "they talked more about skin color, how to get it, and what it meant to them to get it." This led to further discussions of skin color and what different skin pigments mean in the world in which they live.

When I visited this classroom toward the end of the children's work on the Family Study Curriculum, I saw their portraits on the walls of the room. Intriguing they were, to say the least, when one thought of studies that Kenneth Clark of the City University of New York had conducted some decades before, at about the time of the founding of MCS. Clark found that many African-American children aspired to be white, as evidenced by their choosing white dolls over black, or by portraying themselves as white, or of lighter skin than they had, in self-portraits. As the School's director noted, "Kenneth Clark would have to be impressed by the self-portraits in the 7-8s classroom."

Each student also designs and sews a quilt piece that illustrates something important about his or her family. The pieces are eventually sewn together, providing yet another way of sharing and comparing for the students. In this way, the curriculum supports the individual child as part of a classroom and school where sharing, discussing, and understanding the commonalties as well as the differences among them are central and important.

The 8-9s children begin their explorations of human diversity with an extensive study of Native American cultures.

The Family Study Curriculum naturally provides opportunities for the children to discuss what families can be, what different kinds of families or households can be found among their classmates, and how such differences can be acknowledged and celebrated. They may discover that one child's parent is older than another's grandparent. How does that happen? Another child reveals that she is adopted a revelation that leads to discussion about what a "real" parent or grandparent is.

The Family Study Curriculum, the head teacher suggests, challenges the children to consider who they really are and to express this to others: "We try to ask them not to hide behind who they think they should be. That's the hard part. A lot of times they want to deny that `This is important to me,' or `This is what I look like.'" The children are encouraged to feel that who they are, as members of a particular family with a specific history, has value and interest, not only for themselves but for others as well.

The 8-9s Classroom

In this classroom, children have their first extended experience in the study of another culture. They begin the year with a focus on Native Americans, with particular emphasis on the Northeastern groups, especially those who lived on Manhattan Island or in the neighboring regions.

"Not only do we talk about Native Americans and who they are today, and what some of their struggles are," the teacher of the 8-9s says, "but we also ask how they got here and what was their life was like long ago, before the arrival of Europeans." In this way they get, perhaps, the most comprehensive sense of the continuities, as well as the discontinuities, of the Native American experience with their life today.

The children do their own research on some aspect of Native Americans that interests them, collecting information through reading, sharing and discussing what they have learned in class, and writing essays about what they have learned. Discussions in class might focus on the ecological environment of the pre-colonial period, the attitudes Native Americans had — and often continue to have — toward the land and their relationship to it as caretakers. Such a discussion led, during the year I visited the School, to an awareness of the cultural conflicts between the European explorers and colonists, whose attitude toward land was one of property.

In their essays, the students may write about how Native Americans subsisted before the Europeans came — through hunting, fishing and gardening. They may compose an essay on how they made their clothes and shelters, or about the rituals and beliefs that were important to them.

The study of the Northeastern Native Americans becomes a point of reference for further study of other groups as well. In conjunction with this study, they read *Sing Down the Moon* about the fate of the Navajos as they were driven off their land and sequestered on reservations where the land was not adequate for survival. But later in the year they went on to other novels exploring cultural differences and cultural contact. A reading of *Trumpet of the Swan* led to a discussion of what it means to be a "disabled" person. They read *Felita*, a story about the reception Puerto Ricans had as they moved into city neighborhoods where they encountered distrust and prejudice. They read *Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*, a story about a girl who moves from China to Brooklyn, and the conflicts she experienced as she came into contact with a culture very different from her own.

Discussions of these and other readings in class open up possibilities for students to bring up issues that concern them as they grow up and become increasingly aware of the social worlds which form their context. For example, last year students in this classroom were asking, "Why are adults like that? Why can't they accept someone who is different from them?" So there was a discussion about how and why children sometimes seem able to accept racial, ethnic, religious and other differences more readily than adults. The children also express their feelings about these and other themes — sometimes troubling — through poetry, letters, essays and other writings.

An example of how the study of different cultural groups leads to an increased awareness: the children were reading and discussing a series of cartoons by Gary Larson when they noticed that he repeatedly made fun of Native Americans. They found five or six cartoons, between September and November, that displayed what they felt was racist bias. They wrote a letter to his publisher, raising this issue and questioning the implications of the cartoons.

On a more general level, their study of the indigenous cultures gives them a framework for analyzing the various waves of explorers, colonizers and immigrants who came here and displaced those cultures. Through an end-of-the-year study of New Amsterdam, the 8-9s go beyond the Native American experience to look at

At one end of the 9-10's classroom last year, one could find posted on a bulletin board this "List of Interview Questions"

- **How did you get to America?**
- **What is a sponsor?**
- **What do you think of American culture?**
- **When did you come to America?**
- **Why did you leave your country at that time?**
- **What transportation did you take?**
- **What did you bring with you?**
- **What was America like at that time?**
- **Did you maintain the culture of your country?**
- **How did you keep your traditions and customs in America?**
- **How old were you when you came?**
- **Were you happy here or did you prefer being in your native country**
- **When you first immigrated to America, what was your life like?**
- **Did you bring relatives?**
- **Did you settle in a particular neighborhood? Why?**

some familiar themes in another context. What happens when one group of people moves into an area where another has already been living and then attempts to replace the first group's language, religion, and culture? Who has what rights in these contexts? Why are they denied by one group and struggled for by another? How did people try to defend their culture?

This extension of themes and issues from one context to another prepares the 8-9s for what lies ahead in the 9-10s.

The 9-10s Classroom

At one end of the 9-10's classroom last year, one could find a list of questions posted on a bulletin board. At the top of the list, a heading reads, "List of Interview Questions" (see box, next page).

One need not be familiar with the educational philosophy of MCS nor interview the 9-10s teacher, to guess that this list is the creation of children. It is almost possible to imagine, from the very ordering of the questions themselves (consider the first three, for example) as well as their content, the classroom discussion out of which these

questions evolved. Its content, too, bespeaks the young mind, revealing that particular point of view, and a specific kind of curiosity about the world which would be difficult for adults to adopt, or which we have lost.

"What transportation did you take?" "Were you happy here?" Not, "What were the political and economic forces that drove the immigrants out of their native countries to seek some better kind of life in America?" That is an adult's question. In the list on the 9-10s bulletin board, we find instead — as we should, given MCS's perspective on learning and on children — an expression of a curiosity about people's experiences, their feelings, their possessions, their ways of living. It is perhaps not too much to read into the list some attempt to connect in a personal way with the past and with the cultural history represented by their prospective interviewees: American immigrants.

But I think the list also implies that — if it is indeed the product of children thinking, talking, reflecting — they are not children set adrift without guidance. These are the kinds of questions children can arrive at only after considerable experience with questioning itself.

The children have had that kind of experience, as we have seen, in their earlier years at MCS. They have discovered each other and explored each other's identity, personal history and family. They have begun to become aware of "unfairness" in the world. They have seen something of the struggle of oppressed and suppressed groups in U. S. society. They have tried to find answers to some of society's deepest problems — racism, poverty, inequality, injustice. It is likely that by the time they reach the 9-10s they have gotten at least an inkling about the distribution (or maldistribution) of power in our society. Along with all that, they have begun to learn how to appreciate the differences among themselves and within the world, and to recognize the commonalties too. Now, in the 9-10s, they will embark on a series of explorations of one of the most difficult and complex themes of U. S. history: the immigration process.

They explore the cultures of different groups, looking at what is preserved, what is modified, and what is cast aside of the cultural traditions of each group as it moves into a neighborhood and forms an ethnic enclave. A study of the Lower East Side — once an Eastern European Jewish enclave with its strong Yiddish traditions, now with a mix of Chinese and Latino cultures — led naturally last year to a consideration of the changing ethnic and cultural makeup of the city itself. Field trips are made to this neighborhood, as well as to Chinatown and El Barrio (East Harlem). And last year the class visited the Bronx Museum to study an exhibit of *casitas*, the little "country houses" that Puerto Ricans have constructed on empty lots throughout their various *barrios* in New York City to recreate a lost agrarian life on the Island.

The study of immigration does not stop with a consideration of the cultural traditions that groups bring, or with an analysis of how those traditions change. Students at this age want explanations of these historical processes, and much time is spent discussing why different groups came. For example, some groups, such as the early Puritans, came to escape religious persecution; others, such as the Eastern European Yiddish, to escape religious persecution and racial-ethnic hatred; some came to escape the poverty of a rural existence on inadequate land, such as the Irish and the Sicilians. Others came to escape famine, as the Chinese did in the nineteenth century.

The 9-10s social studies curriculum has traditionally been about immigration, but what about the African-American experience? Theirs was not an "immigrant" experience. Children want to know about slavery and its effect on slaves. They want to understand those who enslaved others and the experiences of those who were enslaved. They want to know why slavery has existed.

The theme of immigration is clearly important and certainly speaks to the personal experiences or family roots of at least some of the children. Some years ago, a former teacher in this classroom focused on the experiences of particular groups: the forced immigration of the Irish during the Great Famine, the economic pressures on southern and eastern Europeans to leave their small farms and rural villages for a new life in the industrial centers of America, etc.

A subsequent teacher focused on the theme of "forced immigration," trying to find a place for the African-American experience within the concept of immigration. Currently, the teacher is herself an African American, and is developing an additional curriculum that focuses on the African-American experience, beginning with an acknowledgment that slavery is at its roots.

Within this context, the different manifestations of slavery can also be explored, for of course it has not been a fate reserved exclusively for the slaves who were brought to the Americas under the pressures of an agrarian capitalism. That was a particular experience of slavery, and it helps to understand it if comparisons can be made to other forms, other experiences. What was different? What remains the same?

This brief sketch of the evolution of the social studies curriculum in the 9-10s classroom at MCS illustrates the open-ended and exploratory quality of the School's curriculum.

Again, literature plays an important role in the explorations the students make of

"Questions we have about immigration," reads the heading on another wall poster

- **Did new immigrants in America have the same rights as American citizens?**
- **How large were the boats immigrants traveled on?**
- **Did the Africans who were on the slave ships stop at Ellis Island?**
- **Were some of the immigrants homeless in their homelands?**
- **Why did these people decide to leave their native country?**
- **After immigrants were accepted in the U. S. did they have to be transported to their destination?**
- **Were immigrants ever allowed to leave the boat while on their way to the U. S.?**
- **Why did they bring the Africans to America?**

the immigration process. Through literature, students are given an opportunity to identify with a character from another culture, to see things through his or her eyes, and to relate that not only to their own experiences and to that of their families, but to the historical dimensions of immigration and cultural change in this country as well. Students work together in small groups to choose and read books in common. The teacher also reads to them at story time. It is not unusual to see the teacher reach for a book like *A Pictorial History of Black Americans* to illustrate a point or to help students find answers to their questions.

This year the 9-10s have been reading books that portray the experiences of people coming into contact with another culture, or having to deal with ethnic conflict or with racism and poverty. They read *Tales of the Elders*, a series of oral histories of immigrants' experiences in New York City. In *Felita*, a novel for young readers, the children learn about a young Puerto Rican girl whose family moves from a Puerto Rican to a white neighborhood, experiencing racism for the first time in her young life. *Number the Stars* involves these readers in the experiences of a Jewish girl in Denmark during the Holocaust. In *A Girl Called Boy* they read about how a nine-year-old girl steps back in time to cope with feelings of shame that her ancestors were slaves. They experience the struggles of a poor white Southern girl who gets in trouble a lot and has to struggle with what it means to be poor in *Queenie Peazy*.

On other walls in this classroom, one finds maps, more posters with lists of questions, other posters displaying the "Components of Culture," and the children's written reviews of books they have read relating to the theme of immigration.

A map of the world with push pins showing the countries of origin of each child's family is on one wall. A list by the map identifies the countries, or continents: Africa, Russia, England, Wales, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Native America (Cherokee), Ireland, Puerto Rico, Barbados . . . .

"Questions we have about immigration," reads the heading on another wall poster. Again, the questions reveal that eclectic, excited curiosity that is native to children's minds, but that can be seen reaching beyond itself as well — with the guidance of their teachers — to explore further things that are difficult in the world, that are problematic, that "stir kids up" (see box, previous page).

Notes

1. All quoted speech cited in this chapter is from my field notes.

Chapter Four
The Upper School

Overview

The human world has always been — culturally, linguistically, socially, and in many other ways — a diverse world. That is not new. Nor is contact between different human groups new. Witness, for example, the spread of cultivated plants like maize and the potato from the Andes throughout what Europeans came to call the "New World." For these plants to travel throughout the South and North American continents meant that information crossed hundreds of cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Yet today we North Americans seem more aware of cultural diversity and cultural contact than ever before in our history. The recent emphasis on multicultural curriculum in state-supported schools mentioned in the opening sections of this report is just one more piece of

evidence of our increasing consciousness of the world as a multicultural world.

Why, if my suppositions are correct, are we becoming more aware? I won't attempt to answer this question. Perhaps the world has changed so much in recent decades that we cannot help but become aware of diversity. In New York City alone, the specific cultural, ethnic and racial mix of the population has changed considerably. And of course, sometimes when we become aware of that diversity, it is through publication by the news media of serious conflicts between the various different groups that compose our society today.

Multiple Perspectives: Questioning the World

These scant reflections may serve as a backdrop for our consideration of diversity and multiculturalism in the Upper School's curriculum. The shifting patterns of diversity and interaction among different human groups form a context for questioning that world. At this age, MCS students increasingly want to know what the world is really like and why it is as we find it today. They want to know who they are, but now in relation to larger, even global contexts. They want also to continue to believe in the democratic ideals which the School represents. They express these needs and desires for knowledge in the questions they ask (See box, next page). They are not told to ask them by their teachers; rather, they discover them as they share them with each other with the assistance of teachers.

Through these kinds of questions that Upper School students themselves come up with, they further extend those explorations into the territory of cultural diversity we identified as a theme that weaves the various threads of the Lower School's curriculum into a whole, brightly patterned fabric. We saw that even the youngest children at MCS question their world, particularly when they come to realize the injustices that humans have perpetrated on each other. And we saw that much of the Lower School curriculum, especially in the early years, is designed to create a learning environment which encourages children's natural curiosity about their world.

But now, in the Upper School, the students' natural curiosity increasingly unfolds, into a more informed, more global, critical thinking. Certainly that is what Upper School teachers seek to encourage. We have said that the students "extend" the explorations of the world they began in the Lower School. This is, I believe, quite generally true. The Upper School program relies upon all that has happened in the Lower School children's learning experiences.

Yet, it seems to me, based on what several Upper School teachers have said, that the learning process there is not in any sense of the word "merely" an extension of the Lower School. There is something qualitatively different. As a not fully informed observer, I may be simply guessing, but it seems to me that there is a multicultural curriculum in the Upper School that supports the students in "problematizing" their world, and it does so in a particular way.

That way, I suggest, is to foster a context in which there is a play back and forth between learning *about* the different peoples of the world, and *questioning* that world. This is where being able to *understand* "the other," of being able to take on the perspective of people who have been defined — by history, by those who hold power, by those we call "leaders," by whomever — as "different" from ourselves, becomes so important.

I think it is partly out of learning something of the different experiences, and the different points of view that diverse groups have in the history of the world, and in contemporary society, that critical thought becomes possible. How can we not support students when, for example, we lead them to discover the different "points of view" (so weak a phrase!) expressed in the terms, "The Age of Discovery and Exploration," and "The Age of Conquest and Exploitation." Students will learn this contrast applies not only to the expansion of Europe

Upper School students want to know what the world is really like and why it is as we find it today

- **Where did the different human groups we know today come from? What are the origins of these groups? What is the origin of humankind?**
- **How do people with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds see this world? What is their experience and how do they make sense of it? What are some ways we can learn about and understand the experiences of different peoples?**
- **What contributions have different groups made to U. S. society? What can we learn about others, and about ourselves, by learning to see things from the different perspectives of these various human groups?**
- **Who are the different human groups that have existed in the history of the world? What have been the forces that created them, moved them, that sometimes changed, or even destroyed them?**
- **Why is there conflict between some groups? Why have some groups taken advantage of and exploited others?**
- **Why is there injustice and inequality, racism and ethnocentrism?**
- **If there are problems in the world today, what can we do to help solve them?**
- **What is the nature of our participation to be in this society, and in this world?**
- **Who has power in society? Do we, as students, have power? How do people get power and how do they use it? How should they use it?**

and subsequent colonization of much of the rest of the world, but also to other times and places in history.

The clash of cultures, the struggles for power, as well as the creativity, ingenuity, perseverance and other positive qualities of human history demand critical reflection and questioning. At the same time, once questions begin to come up, once students start discovering the problems as well as the glories of human history, they will be stimulated to further investigations. They will seek further understanding of what different cultures have contributed to our world, and they will come to recognize — if they have not already done so — the relationship between understanding and one's position as an individual in a particular social and historical context. There is, ideally at least, a play back and forth between learning something, questioning what one has learned, learning more in order to an-

swer those questions, finding new questions, and so on.

Moreover, the sense of community that we found to be so important in the Lower School learning environment is still very much alive in the Upper School. Students continue to work together to make a difference in the world of the School. This experience is important because it provides students with contexts in which some of the questions they have been asking about the world can find some answers, answers that are not always forthcoming from their reading and other academic studies.

Students continue to work together to make a difference in the world of the School.

For example, fifth graders publish the School newspaper six times a year. Some of the fifth-grade students may become concerned with contemporary problems such as the AIDS epidemic or the wars being fought around the world. They get together to write an article on the topic. They do some research, write and publish the article. It doesn't end there, because then they get feedback from other people in the School, students as well as faculty.

Sixth graders act as library assistants. They help the younger children find their way around among the resources of the library and assist the librarian in developing and carrying out projects with the Lower School students. And seventh graders participate in a program of child development, working as assistants in the 4-5s classroom once a week. Some of the questioning Upper School students engage in, not surprisingly, involves questioning authority and those who have power. But as library assistants or as classroom aides working with younger children, suddenly they are the teachers, they are the authorities. This experience can help them tease out some of the subtle differences between using authority to work cooperatively with others and using it to control them.

Eighth graders use their accumulated knowledge of the School to act as tour guides for visitors' groups. This is particularly appropriate, not simply because they know the School well, but because they are now in the unique position of making a move out of one world into one that can be rather different. What MCS has taught them to value in themselves and in others, may not be so valued in that other world beyond the School.

As the eighth graders contemplate the demands of that world, they must look back and reflect on whether the School has prepared them to enter it. By taking visitors around the School and explaining its philosophy, describing their own experiences, and answering visitors' questions, they are challenged to formulate and publicly articulate their position. Their questioning is not only directed outward, but faces inward toward themselves as well.

Testing, Testing, Testing . . .

To support students in taking the risks to question history and to question their contemporary world seems to me a basic purpose of the Upper School's multicultural curriculum. But there is another factor that also contributes to making the Upper School learning experience qualitatively new with respect to that of the Lower School. This, teachers and administrators will tell you, has to do with that context of further education beyond the School, and beyond the School's control.

Students are expected to take a battery of formal, standardized tests: competency exams in Spanish, social studies, science, English; the California Achievement Test; and the ERB (Educational Records Bureau) test if they plan to apply for entrance to private high schools. Students learn in the course of their Upper School years that they will be measured, assessed and evaluated by their scores on these tests. They will find out that these assessments can affect their future academic careers and, with that, perhaps their life careers. They will discover that these and other tests will

multiply as they continue in their schooling after graduating from MCS.

Upper School students will learn that institutions use these tests to separate people into categories along lines of "success" as measured by an impersonal system of evaluation and assessment. Yet, another discovery will be that most of these tests in fact, reveal very little of their most important achievements in their years at MCS.

In many schools, these tests actually drive the curriculum. Whether or not we accept the claims to validity the tests make, we have to acknowledge their power in our society. MCS staff are aware of that, and are aware too of the "tensions" these really contradictory forces create in the Upper School's curriculum.

It seems important to understand the Upper School curriculum against the background of stresses created by these outside forces of the world of testing. MCS students as a rule do well on these standard measures of academic achievement. For example, 70% of the graduating students gain admission to the secondary schools of their choice. Many are admitted into schools such as Bronx High School of Science or Stuyvesant High School, which require a high score on a competitive written exam. Students at MCS generally score two or three grade levels higher than the national average on the Standford Achievement Test which, beginning with those students classified as equivalent to third graders, students take each Spring. Looking farther down the road, a different measure of achievement is indicated by the fact that most MCS graduates eventually choose teaching or other fields of social service for their adult careers.

Since 1990, the "Living the Dream" Book Award has been a central focus of the literary aspect of the curriculum.

The Fifth Grade

Social studies and literature are two key areas in the fifth grade where multicultural themes emerge. In the beginning of the year, the class looks at the origins of *Homo Sapiens* as a species in the African continent. This study leads to questions of how we, as a species, got from there to where we are now. Where did the different "racial" differentiations that society now accepts come from? What, in fact, was the skin pigment of the early humans? Is there any way to answer this question, since all we have left are fossil remains? How and why did humans begin to migrate from southeastern Africa, eventually to spread out and make the entire globe their "territory"?

Since 1990, the "Living the Dream "Book Award has been a central focus of the literary aspect of the curriculum. This project illustrates how the study of literature in MCS's curriculum becomes something much more than looking for entertainment on the one hand, or learning about literary techniques on the other.

The students had to review a large number of children's books and decide what the criteria should be for the award. Could they find a book that Martin Luther King himself would say, could he be here and read it, "Yes, this book deals with the kind of world that I was dreaming about when I made my `I Have a Dream' speech"? The students assumed, not surprisingly, that a true "multicultural" book would include characters from many different cultures. Yet they found such books rare or nonexistent. With the help of the librarian, they redefined their criteria. They looked for books that would teach them something new and important about another culture.

Through their examination and discussion of a range of such books, the students learned about the complexity of such issues as racism. They explored how racial preju-

dice is often connected to class issues. In considering a book such as *Nobody's Family Is Ever Gonna Change*, they raised questions about how people from different cultures or ethnic groups perceive such groups as gays, upwardly mobile middle-class blacks, the white middle-class, artists, etc. Reading and discussing *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, they drew on what they learned about Native Americans in the 8-9s class to examine what it was like to be a girl in tribal society in North America. This led to a consideration of gender roles in different societies and cultures including, of course, their own.

Other topics covered in fifth grade include an intensive study of ancient Egypt, discussions of how the Middle East has evolved into the modern Arabic world, and the underground railroad in the pre-Civil War US. and how that relates to contemporary society.

The Sixth Grade

A primary goal of social studies in the sixth grade is to provide students with opportunities to think about such central historical questions as: What is history? Who defines it? Who tells it? Who owns it? Who gets included and who gets left out in historical accounts?

In this class, students explore the idea that history has to do not only with small groups of people — the presidents, generals, and "celebrities" who dominate so many traditional school history texts — but with everybody. They study the Civil Rights Movement from multiple perspectives, with particular emphasis on the roles of those who are so often left out of the story, such as women.

Sixth-grade students ask: What is history? Who defines it? Who tells it? Who owns it?

The study of the Civil Rights Movement illustrates how students in the School are encouraged to keep expanding their understanding of the issues in the world they live in, and of the history that has made it what it is. In 1991, when the teacher asked the students to make a list of questions as they began their study of the Movement, they focused almost exclusively on Martin Luther King. What did he eat? What books did he read? How did he treat his wife and children? As they continued their study, they began to realize that the Movement was much larger than one man, that his success as a leader depended on the actions of a lot of different people, many of whom are forgotten or never were included in the accounts we read today. They also learned that other groups, besides Martin Luther King's NAACP, played important roles, such as the student volunteers who traveled to the South to register voters under the aegis of SNCC.

The result? After two months on this project, one student volunteered the realization, "You know, when we first started this, all we wanted to know about was Martin Luther King. And what we're realizing is that he was real important, but it couldn't have happened without the commitment and sacrifices of all the different people who were part of it."

Studying the Civil Rights Movement helps unfold other units on social movements to right injustices. In 1991, the sixth grade followed with a study of the Holocaust, and students come to recognize parallels between human-created disasters: the Holocaust and the slavery and oppression that resulted in the Civil Rights Movement. They looked at Judaism as a culture, and considered how cultures sustain people in times of adversity — how the values, ideals, traditions and rituals of a culture form the cement that bonds people together and gives them strength *as* a people.

In one activity designed to explore processes of social change, the students formed two groups and held a debate. One side had to defend the Board of Education, the other side Brown and the plaintiffs. The teacher found that the group defending segregation did a better job debating, which led to a realization, after some

heated discussion, of how hard it is to change society, even when the injustices are obvious to us. The activity also engendered discussion of questions about the role of individuals in social change. Students were encouraged to raise questions about their own attitudes toward social change. When do you decide to participate and become involved? Which causes would you be willing to commit yourself to and make the necessary sacrifices? When would you decide not to get involved? How can we understand those who take up a cause, as well as those who refuse to involve themselves?

All of this study returns to the child-centeredness of MCS's curriculum which was mentioned in the Introduction: students begin to realize that, yes, individuals can make a difference in their society. They can work for change. Or they can decide not to. But the choice, which can be a difficult one, is one they will make as they grow older and eventually take their place in the society as adults.

The individual is celebrated in these studies, particularly through literature. Students read such books as *Friedrich*, which tells a story about two children growing up in Nazi Germany, one a Jew, one a non-Jew. They are friends at first, but strains develop in their relationship as anti-Jewish feeling becomes more public and is authorized and encouraged by the government. The teacher asked the students how the characters' relationship changed as Hitler came to power. Could they have been friends if they had been teenagers? In the discussion which followed, students talked about how, as children, it is easy to make friends with someone who is "different." All you want is someone to play with. But as you grow into adolescence you begin to establish more or less fixed criteria about who can be a friend and who cannot. Where do these criteria come from? In a context such as that for Jews in Nazi Germany, what is the role of violence in establishing these criteria? How would you expect to feel if you were a member of an African-American family and woke up in the middle of the night to see a cross burning on your front lawn? Would a non-Jew feel the same as a Jew would to see, as a character in *Friedrich* did, a swastika painted in blood red across a doctor's door? Questions of power and powerlessness become important components of the students' understanding of diversity. A Jew in Nazi Germany felt powerless against a racism supported by the police, the military, and the general society. To Jews, a swastika was more than a "cultural" symbol: it was a direct threat to their survival.

The students in this class begin to realize that multiculturalism — or the social, ethnic, political, religious and other forms of diversity our society structures itself around — is more than a question of differences, of acknowledging and respecting those differences.

Multiculturalism becomes something that has to do with how you define yourself, what groups you align yourself with, and the power — or lack of power — that goes along with such alignments. Who aligns with what groups? What groups have power? How do they use that power? Does that power sometimes include the power to write themselves into history and to write others out of it?

Language Arts in the Seventh and Eighth Grades

The Language Arts curriculum in the seventh and eighth grades reflects the complexity of the world and the growing sense of that complexity young adolescents have as they come of age in the world. Questions about power are raised that build on their work in the sixth grade: What are the important issues of power and disempowerment in our society? How can we take action in this society? How can individuals be empowered to take action?

The study of literature keeps such questions in mind. For example, in reading Julius Lester's *To Be a Slave*, students not only looked at the degrading system of sla-

very, but asked, "Who had power in that society? How did the slave owners use their power? What did they use it for? By contrast, did the slaves have any power of their own? What kind of power did the culture they created give them? The students considered the religion and culture of the slaves and the power these gave them not only to endure, but at times to resist and rebel against their subjugation — to turn that subjugation itself into an affirmation of their own roots and into the creation of a rich and unique culture within American society.

Questions about power are raised by seventh-grade students in their language arts program.

In reading *The Catcher in the Rye*, students examined the mental and emotional anguish of one preppy boy who was a member of the elite class. They expanded the study of the book into a consideration of its relationship to those who read it. Why has it been banned in some school districts? Who does it threaten? Whose power does it challenge? Students in homeroom staged a "school board" meeting in which they discussed whether the book should be banned or not, with different students taking different sides of the issue.

A homeroom theme developed around "protest and dissent." Students worked in small groups and researched such issues as recent racial incidents in the Bronx or Brooklyn; interracial relationships; pro-choice and anti abortion debates. They discussed the Clarence Thomas hearings and the views presented by Thomas and Anita Hill.

In the seventh grade, students write autobiographies, discuss difficult moments in family life, and compare their own experiences and views of life at MCS. Another assignment involved having students listen in on conversations they heard on the bus, in the street or at home, to record these as dialogues, and then to share and discuss them with each other. Freedom of expression is encouraged and students are encouraged to celebrate themselves as individuals and to celebrate each other. The literary magazine, produced by seventh and eighth graders but inclusive of writing and artwork from the entire school, provides further opportunity for students to gain a sense of empowerment through their own literary accomplishments.

Seventh and Eighth Grade Social Studies[1]

American history is the focus of social studies in the seventh and eighth grades, but history is not treated here as a mere string of events whose sum total yields little meaning beyond fostering a blind nationalistic chauvinism. Rather, "we take a combined thematic and chronological approach," the seventh-eighth grade social studies teacher writes, "allowing the actual content to evolve and change each year, but also encouraging analysis of long-standing patterns of our histories."

The students at this level "gravitate towards complex and volatile moral questions." They are now able to explore abstract concepts and to apply them to interpretations of the historical past in the present. They are ready to develop their own understandings of how those famous "tides of history" wash up and overlap the present moment. They are eager to explore how their own situations as young people growing toward maturity in a puzzling, intriguing, and sometimes dangerous, contemporary world can find some explanation through the study of history. They are also moral beings, "quick to pass judgment, [who yet] hesitate to hold themselves accountable for how they deal with the world around them," their teacher notes. "History then becomes the vehicle through which they can channel their righteous energy, while seeing their own issues in a historical continuum. Gaining and losing power is part of their daily lives, and makes for meaty discussions."

And so history becomes an examination of the workings of power — most particularly in the United States, both in its internal relations among its citizens and inhabitants, and in its many links to other societies around the world. But the examination of power is not limited merely to the halls and corridors and private boardrooms of those elite who wield power. History is not merely the biographies of "great men," as someone once said. The students may sometimes "fixate on how little power or control they seem to have over their own destinies. Thus the themes we explore," their teacher explains, "tend to revolve around people who have been, for economic, political, gender or racial reasons, disenfranchised."

"The focus becomes how individuals choose to empower themselves, despite overriding messages of degradation, emphasizing the strengthening value of community and the power of individual commitment."

The importance of the thematic side of the approach to history in the seventh and eighth grades is clearly evident here. There is a logic in the design of this curriculum that — very much in the spirit of the School's educational philosophy — goes well beyond the theoretical and speculative. The central theme of power is chosen not because some theoretician of pedagogy has so dictated, but rather through a conversation between teacher and students — a conversation that allows the students to take a certain measure of control over their own learning, and thereby challenges them to make that learning meaningful and important, something of real value in their search to understand their world:

> The focus becomes how individuals choose to empower themselves, despite overriding messages of degradation, emphasizing the strengthening value of community and the power of individual commitment. Be it the labor movement of the early twentieth century, War and Imperialism during the nineteenth and twentieth century, or Women's political history, the seventh and eighth graders grapple with the complex choices one makes in order to make one's own world livable.

It is to be expected then that this kind of history curriculum must move beyond — without neglecting — the official documents of textbook histories that have dominated for too long our social studies and history curricula in our schools. "The primary sources of each unit are oral histories, through which the children hear the voices of the people — women, children, rich, poor, of color, white, English and non-English speakers — who have lived the struggles and made the choices."

The students come to understand these voices, especially perhaps the voices of history's oppressed from whom power has so often been wrenched to be used against them. But this curriculum is not a curriculum of "complaint":

> The students begin to understand, in this two-year course of study, how power is not merely a commodity — you take some away from those who have too much and give it to those who have little. History has never been that simple. Human beings and the societies they create are, if nothing else, complex, subtle, mercurial, and interwoven into a network of contradictions. The students begin to discover some of these contradictions in themselves when "through simulations and intense discussions [they] take on the roles [of power] they so easily abhor. They are amazed by their own tendency to revert to the political and social injustices they had judged previously. Thus they begin to realize the complexities of how one makes the world an equitable place. If there is one message or idea I hope they come away with, it is the ability to ask themselves "how far will I go with the power I do have? And what kind of an obligation do I have to those who have less than I do?" These questions require, I believe, not complete indoctrination, but an appreciation of how easy it is to abuse whatever power one has. And that one always has a choice before one acts.

One may add that the students learn along the way that their own power as

both actors and thinkers can be enhanced through participation with others as they experience learning and working together in a variety of ways on these issues of power.

We spoke in Chapter One of the importance of linking study of the "culture" in multiculturalism with the play and movement of power through history. Surely, the seventh and eighth grade social studies teacher's account of her curriculum brings diversity and political and economic struggles together, not only conceptually, but in the very experiences of her students as they run this two-year course.

Notes

1. All citations in this section are drawn from a well-written and thoughtful description of the seventh and eighth grade social studies curriculum by Amy Bauman, for which I offer grateful acknowledgment.

Chapter Five
Special Programs

Special subject teachers play a dual role in relation to MCS's multicultural curriculum. On the one hand their role is to reveal the multicultural nature of their special subject. On the other, it is to collaborate with other teachers, adding to each others' curricula in ways that expose a broader multicultural perspective. Some of this role may be fulfilled through joint development of curriculum to be taught collaboratively or concurrently; some of it may be fulfilled through arranging museum trips, walking tours or other excursions outside the walls of MCS.

In the Lower School, special subject teachers primarily coordinate with classroom teachers and support what goes on in the classroom. Special subject curricula provide another dimension through which to explore the multicultural

topics that are already being studied. They may provide the students with access to some of the ways that the people they are studying used art, science, or music as part of their lives. The special subject curricula may also be the arena through which MCS students themselves can distinguish parallels in their own lives.

Special subject teachers and classroom teachers collaborate to broaden and develop the multicultural perspective in each others' curricula.

In the Upper School the dual role of special subjects continues. I witnessed collaboration among teachers and the development of integrated curriculum across disciplines uncharacteristic of many other schools I have seen. I also witnessed independent curricula that conformed more to the expectations and evaluations of the special subjects in the world outside MCS. In the case of science, the curriculum responded to students' interests in how things work (human body, the natural world, electricity, etc.) and a curiosity about whether science is in any way related to the multicultural world that has been the primary focus of their education. In Spanish, the curriculum included learning to speak, read or write the Spanish language well enough to graduate into upper level high school courses and learning about the diversity that exists in Latino culture in New York City, the Americas, or the world. As students get closer to eighth grade they, their parents, and teachers become increasingly aware of the reality that standardized assessments of knowledge focus almost exclusively on arriving at solutions to algebra equations, being able to conjugate verbs, or knowing how to read periodic tables.

Students have ample opportunity to engage in discussions about why certain kinds of knowledge are increasingly taught, others are left out, and why they encounter traditional ways of demonstrating one's knowledge more frequently. At the same time, special subject teachers look for ways to make connections between these apparently opposing goals.

The science program acquaints students with the way the human body works, helps them make links to nutrition and good health, and decisions they are already making about what they eat, whether they will smoke and take drugs, or get sufficient exercise. It is not unusual for students to demonstrate their understanding of these links by taking up related causes — animal rights or school lunches, to name just a few.

The Music Program

The music program addresses multiculturalism in at least two distinct ways. From the 4-5's through the eighth grade, students attend weekly sessions with a specialist where they sing music from a wide variety of cultures. They learn madrigals and spirituals, songs of resistance and freedom, songs from musicals, folksongs, and song cycles written by composers of many cultures.

Some of the songs have become part of a shared repertoire which all MCS children at least recognize and possibly sing. These are often sung at school-wide assemblies that focus on particular holidays such as

Students learn madrigals and spirituals, songs of resistance and freedom, songs from musicals, folksongs, and song cycles created by a variety of cultural traditions.

Thanksgiving and Harvest Holidays, Winter Holidays of Light, or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday. They are an integral part of whatever common MCS culture can be made out of the tremendous diversity within the community.

through an annual performance series. These programs are organized to expose students to music and related art forms that are not as integral a part of the MCS program. During the 1991-1992 year, individuals or groups performed everything from original jazz compositions using vibraphone, to African-derived percussion instruments, to Andean folk music, to Appalachian dulcimers and limberjacks.

In previous years, the series included musical performances of Japanese drums and classical music using wind, string, and brass instruments, as well as dance performances of bomba and plena from Puerto Rico, flamenco from Spain, East Indian story dances, and the Children's Theater of the Deaf.

The Art and Shop Programs

Beginning with the 5-6's, students attend weekly sessions with a specialist in Art, and beginning with the 6-7's, the same is true for Wood Shop. The special teachers responsible for these programs take on the same dual role as other specialists. They serve as advisors to both head and other special teachers on how to integrate art and woodworking experiences into the multicultural classroom curricula. The art specialist uses forms and techniques from a variety of the world's cultures as models for student-produced projects. These might include masks from China, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, or Africa, pottery designs from many of the cultures represented in the study of immigration, weavings (which incorporate activities from the Farm as well), and clay, wood, or wire sculpture.

Shop is primarily a place for students to become familiar with the materials and tools and to use them to produce projects of their own design. Not unlike other special subject areas, students get fascinated with the way things work and how to make them using wood and Plexiglas. Yet they also are provided the opportunity to produce cylinder seals and scarab pendants at the same time their fifth grade social studies curriculum covers the cultures that used these artifacts. It has become an annual ritual for fifth graders to sport their scarab pendants proudly. Each new generation is questioned about their origin and is only too happy to oblige their admirers with detailed answers.

While the primary exhibits of art throughout the School display the children's creations, both the art and woodshop rooms house exhibits of multicultural art forms connected to individual or classroom projects as well as small, multicultural libraries where students get ideas and motivation for their work. MCS also displays a fine collection of African art which has inspired not only art projects but whole curriculum units on the societies in which the pieces were used.

The Library Program

The Library As Resource Center

The librarian has built up the MCS collection to include works both by and about people of color, women, and a few books about gay and lesbian children and households. Some of the collection is centrally housed in the library, the rest is distributed to classroom libraries for easy access.

The librarian works closely with teachers in each classroom to support research topics. Seventh and eighth graders use the library primarily in this way. In writing reports for social studies class on topics in American History, they can find a broad spectrum of resources, including books that detail the roles played by racial, cultural groups and women. Those looking for biographies can find contemporary works on Bessie Smith, Maya Angelou, Frederick Douglass, Barbara Jordan, Rita Moreno, Cesar Chavez, Roberto Clemente and Martina Navratilova.

Science reports, Spanish reports, and English assignments can be completed in a multicultural context with the available resources. Both students and teachers

multicultural context with the available resources. Both students and teachers avail themselves of the materials and the librarian's knowledge of the collection on a regular basis. These are only a few examples. While there are many others, the MCS library is still a small one and students are encouraged to use public libraries and other resource centers around the city too.

The Library As Imagination Center

This portion of the library program is developed collaboratively by the librarian and individual teachers who identify themes the children can experiment and play with, using not only the library's resources, but its inventive librarian as well.

In weekly visits to the library, the 4-5's through sixth graders are not merely advised what books to read to find out about different cultures, but participate in creating artifacts of their own, including dramatizing myths, writing their own versions of folktales, and creating "worlds" that display their conception of what it was like to live in, for example, a Yiddish village in Poland in the pre-Nazi era.

The library is a resource center with an excellent collection of children's books about the world's diverse cultures. It is also a place where children's imagination takes off, creating "worlds" that display their conception of what it was like to live in, for example, a Yiddish village in Poland in the pre-Nazi era.

The 4-5's and 5-6's make weekly 30-minute visits to the library in small groups. Prior to their visit, the librarian and his two sixth grade assistants set out approximately two dozen books on the library tables from which the children will select one to take home for the week. These always include a multicultural range of picture and easy reading choices. In addition, they will gather in a corner of the rug to hear a story and/or play a game.

Among the themes selected for exploration in 1991-1992 were giants and boats. To begin the giant study, the children compared notes about all the different giants they had heard of in books, on television, or in stories told by someone they knew. Over a period of weeks they heard more stories and read books about all kinds of giants. They asked the question, "Are all giants males? Has anybody ever heard of a lady giant?" They drew their own giant's head and made it the cover of a book which told of their giant's favorite food, games, etc. They created a "multicultural" world of giants, including both female and male giants, and Black, Brown, and White giants.

To kick off the study of boats, children listed all the different kinds of boats they knew: tugboats, rowboats, canoes, steamships, Staten Island ferryboats . . . and on and on. The books read to them included *Paddle-to-the-Sea* about a Native American boy who carves a boat and sends it on a journey from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean; and *The Lady Who Saw The Good Side of Everything*, a tall tale about a woman and her cat whose house is washed away by a flood, sending them down the river to the sea. Two other books by multicultural authors were included in this unit — *Paper Boats* by Rabindranath Tagore, an East Indian author, and *A River Dream* by Allen Say, an Asian-American author.

The climax of this unit for the 5-6's was a day trip to the Twin Towers to peer out into the New York Harbor and record all the boats they saw. Upon returning to MCS, they painted murals of what they saw, and made lists and charts of their observations.

The 9-10's spent virtually one entire year on folktales. They began by examining universal elements of folktales: usual characters, special characters like the third child in a family being a wise child, characteristic use of language ("Nay" is used in-

stead of "No"), trickery, courage, and always a moral. They went on to see how different cultures' folktales had characteristic elements. "Last week the teacher read the 9-10's a folktale and asked them to guess where it came from," explained the librarian recently. "The story had a troll who lived in the woods, and on that basis, almost every child in the class guessed that it was a European folktale. Many of them specified Ireland or England which was close. They really got the whole curriculum."

Once they knew about folktales, every child had to learn one and tell it to the class. They went on to read as many folktales as they could, always noting on a special form where the tale was from, a summary of the plot, and the moral of the story. Some students read all the folktales selected for the project and even brought in collections or favorite books from home.

The next activity involved working in small groups. The students had to choose between Hispanic, Asian, Native American, European, African, and Caribbean. Each group of students looked at several folktales in their category and chose one to dramatize. They developed their dramas for weeks. "Now that they are strong, we are working on how to give them texture," said the librarian. "They were all keeping very close to the story, but now they are experimenting with ways of letting the audience know some of what they themselves know about the setting, like what it feels like to be in the woods, or in the desert, or on a tropical island."

During the week of April 27, 1992 MCS hosted a school-wide Storytelling Festival in honor of Ezra Jack Keats. Outside storytellers told stories (mostly folktales) from many cultures, and the 9-10's volunteered to go around to different classrooms and tell or perform their folktales.

Another rather interesting twist on the theme of multiculturalism as it is elaborated in the library program involved fifth graders making labyrinths. The librarian discussed with them what they already knew about labyrinths. They looked the word up in dictionaries and other sources. Through that effort they discovered the ancient Greek myth of the minotaur.

These exercises led them to think about other labyrinths they had read about or knew about, including those found in *Alice in Wonderland* and *Slake's Limbo,* a story about a boy who lives in the subway. Some students added the labyrinths of the film series "*Raiders of the Lost Ark*." Others came up with examples such as the Underground Railroad, welfare offices and city hospitals.

The next step involved the fifth graders researching each of their labyrinths by reading myths and stories, visiting the Transit Museum, or recalling scenes in films. They then built miniature models of labyrinths out of cardboard boxes. Students worked in five small groups to do this construction and designed a larger-scale model that could be built in a corner of the classroom. They discussed ways they might have things happen in each labyrinth that would excite the interest of younger children in the School. This included developing short plays with characters appropriate to each labyrinth.

They invited the 6-7's to their labyrinthine classroom, divided them into groups, and gave them a tour. In each booth, the younger children were invited to participate in a different way.

In the *Alice in Wonderland* labyrinth the children were served crackers with jam. But they had to choose between orange jam and lime jam, a new experience for most! In the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* labyrinth, the younger children were told this was a very dangerous labyrinth and they had to wear a "talisman" to help them get past the dangers. In the subway labyrinth, the 6-7s encountered a token taker who told them stories about how, when he was young, the subway cost but three cents. Each child had a "token" to put in a box. The token taker asked them why they thought the subway cost so much more now. After passing through the "turnstile,"

Sixth-grade students formulated their own questions in a study of advertising

- **Are people who smoke really good for the environment?**
- **Do all Black males have to be good at basketball and wear fancy sneakers?**
- **How do we get sucked in by the colors used in these ads or the famous people and objects they use?**
- **Who decides that a 'cool' camel should be used to advertise cigarettes?**
- **Who is the intended audience?**
- **Whose point of view is going to be used?**
- **Who decides what programs they will appear in?**

they saw a play in which life in the subway is presented through the eyes of the rats.

The sixth grade library theme during 1991-92 was "survival," and it was explored through books, advertising, and films. At a time in their lives when survival takes on new meaning, this theme gave them a forum in which to examine and express ideas and feelings of vulnerability, of being manipulated, and yet of feeling powerful enough to bring about change in some of the things they dislike.

They spent weeks collecting advertisements to be examined in class. As they looked at cigarette ads where actors masquerade as concerned environmentalists and at shoe ads featuring Michael Jordan, Patrick Ewing, and Magic Johnson, the subtleties of the messages became apparent.

The conversation was not always one-sided. Some students admitted they liked some of the images being used in bad ways by advertisers. The final project for the sixth grade was to design their own ad and produce it on a large piece of paper. These hung undisturbed in the balcony of the sixth-grade classroom.

"Are people who smoke really good for the environment? Do all Black males have to be good at basketball and wear fancy sneakers? How do we get sucked in by the colors used in these ads or the famous people and objects they use?" they asked themselves and each other. "Who decides that a 'cool' camel should be used to advertise cigarettes? Who is the intended audience? Whose point of view is going to be used? Who decides what programs they will appear in?"

To get a more historical sense of how diverse groups have approached survival, sixth graders were exposed to a series of films. These varied from segments of "*Eyes on the Prize*" about the Civil Rights Movement to "*Skokie*" about white supremacists. Through these contrasting films, they were able to look into the complexities of how groups in conflict with one another may be deeply committed to survival in a hostile environment and may put considerable energy into achieving their goal of survival.

A visit to the exhibit "Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews," brought this part of the curriculum to a close. The exhibit highlighted some of the common bonds between these two communities (racism and anti-Semitism), in part through a videotape made by high school students showing how African-Americans and American Jews have been working in Crown Heights to break down stereotypes in both communities.

The discussion then moved to the roles played by traditions in cultural survival. After viewing "*Fiddler on the Roof*" sixth graders discussed the language, the humor, the behaviors, and the rituals that have ensured the survival of Jewish culture. They drew parallels in their own experiences and communities. They asked questions, "What happens when traditions change? Does change necessarily mean they break down? Do we always need traditions or are they more important to certain generations?"

Through experiences like these, children have a chance to explore their own imaginations, to play with themes, and to act out different roles that add an important dimension to their study of cultural diversity.

The Manhattan Country School Farm[1]

Cooperation and Community

People often ask, "What does the word 'Country' stand for in the School's name?" It refers to the School's farm located in the picturesque Catskills near Roxbury, New York. It was recognized from the beginning that urban children need a firsthand experience with the economies of nature, of raising their own food, and of caring for themselves. The Farm provides that experience and it also gives the students who live at the Farm a week at a time (two or three times each school year),[2] a chance to practice the communal values the School has always stood for. The meaning of "community" for the students changes through this experience of living together.

It is not only that the students are together during these weeks at the Farm; what is important is their sharing of the real responsibilities for running the Farm. This may involve them in cleaning a cow's pen or in preparing a meal for their classmates (hopefully, no connection between these jobs). Students may find themselves working together as a coordinated team to accomplish important farm tasks that would be beyond the reach of any one individual, such as transporting firewood or getting hay down from the mow. Students "learn to take responsibility for their own actions and to recognize their effects on others," Virginia Scheer, the Educational Director of the Farm writes, "whether it is something subjective like hurting another student's feelings, or something concrete like failing to do a job on time." Scheer goes on to point out what the students learn regarding the nature of responsibility and community:

> Children are quick to see the essential nature of their jobs: if there is no firewood they will be cold; with no hay, the animals will go hungry. Every day students are assigned regular tasks to care for the animals or to care for the farm house. Barn chores, meal clean up, sweeping, etc., are all done during the time not in classes — time that is otherwise free for students to explore the farm or to entertain themselves in the hay jump, at the frog pond, or by the stream. Gender plays no role in work assignments. Boys wash dishes and girls work in the barn; girls learn to shovel manure and boys learn to clean bathrooms. In

the Farm faculty itself, the students witness the elimination of what used to be traditional roles for men and women: men supervise housework equally with farm work; women participate fully in outdoor work, and a woman is the Farm's director.

The Farm as Classroom

Formal classes are conducted with the students in addition to the assignment of farm work. These classes provide opportunities for students to learn more about what goes on in a farm, and particularly to participate in the changes in farm activity from season to season. Scheer describes the wide variety of topics covered. As will be evident, these "classrooms" are not limited to rooms in a building:

> Farm classes are devoted to helping the children understand the Farm's connection to and dependence on nature in order to achieve its partial self-sufficiency. Farmwork classes are usually seasonal: harvesting in the fall, dealing with the effects of cold in the winter (for wood, snow shoveling), maple syruping and gardening in the spring. But sometimes farmwork classes include long-term care for the animals, such as repairing pens and fences or cleaning out unused stalls for lambs or pigs that are about to arrive.
>
> In Cooking class, students learn to prepare their own wholesome meals using the meat, milk, eggs, syrup and vegetables the Farm produces. They learn about planning balanced menus, baking bread, and preserving food through freezing, pickling, and jam making.
>
> Textiles class introduces students to the uses of the farm's wool and the processes by which it is turned into colored yarn and woolen cloth. Finally, the Nature class takes children away from the farmstead, where nature has been domesticated, to the parts of the farm and its surrounding valley where the deer, beavers, cottontail rabbits, and wild turkeys make their homes. They learn how the wild animals meet their survival needs and about each animal's place in the food chain.

Among other things, the School's Farm gives city children a firsthand experience with the economies of nature, as well as a chance to practice the communal values the School has always stood for.

Their study of the two interlinked ecologies of the Farm and the more "untamed" parts of the natural world reveals connections to the continual emphasis of MCS's multicultural program on social responsibility and social change. The Director continues:

> Controversial topics are not avoided at the Farm; they are, in fact, imbedded in our curriculum. After studying the living patterns of wildlife in nature class, students often confront animal rights issues when the consider hunting and trapping as part of wildlife management. They also learn to make critical decisions about land use on their class' own acre of woodlot. And each day when they work in the barn, students recognize the eventual use of pigs and steers as meat, because the names posted beside the animals' pens are all meat related: "Pork Chop," "Meatball," "Shish-Kebob," etc.

Cultural Encounters

New York City offers MCS students many opportunities to be around a variety of peoples, quite obviously. But the Farm offers students a different kind of cultural encounter, one which can shed light on their questions about race in America. Scheer writes:

> Walks to the village of Roxbury often bring into focus the rural community of which MCS Farm is a part. Students must confront the existence of a country culture that is different from their own urban way of life. Children of color encountering a virtually all-white community could be an explosive situation, and on one occasion the students had to be militant in their refusal to accept unfair treatment that they suspected to be racially motivated. To the children's surprise the community rallied to their support in criticizing the manager of a chain convenience store, and reaffirmed their

> change for MCS 9-10s with the Roxbury Central School fourth graders. The children correspond as pen pals and then visit each other at the Farm and at Roxbury Central School. Last year [1992-1993] . . . the Roxbury children also visited the Manhattan Country School in New York. The power of this exchange to offset racism was demonstrated to me when two pen pals — one black, one white — claimed they looked a lot alike because they both liked ballet, and no one from either class pointed out their more obvious difference of skin color. In fifth grade there is a reunion for pen pals, and some of them continue to correspond for years after the exchange has taken place.

The students learn about the traditional culture of the Catskills — the music, art, dance, etc. These forms will have much more meaning for them as they both witness performances and learn to perform themselves:

> The Catskills Folk Music Project is a collaborative program sponsored by MCS Farm, the Roxbury Central School, and the Erpf Catskill Cultural Center to help both urban and rural children realize that there is a viable culture in the Catskills, one in which they can participate. Traditional Catskills musicians work closely with the students on folk instruments such as the guitar, fiddle, bones and accordion, and teach them local square dances. In fifth grade the MCS students share what they have learned in a performance for the residents of a local retirement home.

Again, what students learn about the society and culture and the ecological niche in which the Farm is situated, is linked to questions about social change and about the political and economic interests involved in the relations between city and countryside:

> In eighth grade, as part of the nature curriculum, the students learn to look beyond the Farm and the community of Roxbury to study a current environmental issue. They might consider the imposition of real estate development rules for the town or region; or they might evaluate proposed regulations to protect the New York City watershed in the Catskills. On their final trip to the Farm they act out a simulated hearing or town meeting in which each student takes a role, either as a presenter of the issue (a representative of NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection promulgating the watershed regulations, for example), or as members of the community (for example, farmers whose livelihood would be affected by the regulations). The students debate the issue from the point of view of their roles, but then after all is said and done, vote their own opinion. During one such debate a "farmer," while lamenting the inability of city residents to control their use of water, was heard to say in an aside, "Oh my, that's me! I'm one of the city people who uses water from the Catskills."

Scheer sums up the educational experience offered by the MCS Farm, knitting together the various thematic threads illustrated above:

> By the time they graduate from MCS . . . our students know what kind of work is necessary to produce one's own food and fiber, what it takes to keep oneself warm in the winter, and how to work cooperatively with other members of the group to meet those goals. They understand the place of a farm in nature's larger scheme and how the Farm's viability *as* a farm is dependent on natural processes. They have also seen the relationship between cities and rural areas and how in certain critical ways they depend on each other. In the future when MCS students as adults must make decisions that affect that relationship or must choose their own direction in life, their world will be one that embraces the natural world as well as the human-made world, the rural as well as the urban.

The Spanish Program

Spanish plays a role throughout the School, as it is required of all the students and taught voluntarily to staff and parents. Although it is taught by certain head teachers and two specialists, the role of these specialists remarkably parallels that of other specialists at MCS. Together they develop a plan for the entire school's Spanish program; then they put it into practice

themselves or in collaboration with other teachers. The content at each level is a combination of Spanish language and cultural inquiry.

In relation to the multicultural curriculum, Spanish instruction adds the dimension of language learning to the personal experiences of the students who do not come to MCS already speaking it. For Spanish-speaking students, it provides an environment where they can share parts of themselves that may not be accessed elsewhere, as well as giving them the opportunity to learn reading and writing skills. Everyone at MCS reads the weekly calendar of events, *El Boletín,* to find out about special events and daily menus. Much of "El Boletín" is written in Spanish. Students and staff communicate with the cooks in Spanish, asking for seconds at lunch, borrowing utensils, or simply saying "Gracias."

Spanish instruction adds the dimension of language learning to the personal experiences of the students who do not come to MCS already speaking it.

The goals of cultural units are to promote language learning and to explore the diversity of Latino culture, particularly in the Americas. Students are exposed to the history and culture of the indigenous, European, African, and Asian communities which make up the Spanish-speaking world.

MCS's participation in a Sister School program with the Brenda Cano School in Tipitapa, Nicaragua provides the perfect opportunity for a meaningful exchange in Spanish. Students, teachers, and administrators exchange letters in which they compare their lives and roles in Nicaraguan and New York communities. Many classes have been moved by the description of conditions at Brenda Cano School to organize fund-raising and educational projects in collaboration with a larger Sister City Project.

The 8-9's annually build on their school store responsibility by selling Sister School pencils. They sell enough pencils to send one to every child at Brenda Cano, and that pencil is reported to last an entire year. The fifth grade uses their school newspaper to promote an annual Sister School Button campaign. They design buttons and then sell them to underwrite the cost of sending a quantity to Brenda Cano to be used as academic achievement prizes. Several classes make books which now make up the only library at Brenda Cano.

In the Lower School, exposure to the diversity in the Hispanic world happens through integrating Spanish into classroom life and ongoing curricula. The 6-7's social studies curriculum centers on the study of New York City. In addition to making trips to La Marqueta and walking around El Barrio, the 6-7's decided they would like to go on an imaginary journey to Mexico City as well.

Once their "trip to Mexico" was underway, another student wondered if the class could take a side trip to Honduras and it was arranged. While on all three of these explorations, the 6-7's tasted foods from Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Honduras, listened to children's music, learned children's games and dances, and made souvenirs to remind themselves of the places they have visited. With the assistance of a parent, they wrote to children in Mexico to find out about their daily lives. They anxiously await the response.

The Spanish Program encourages Spanish-speaking students to share their linguistic and cultural heritage with others, as well as to develop their own understanding of that heritage.

The social studies curriculum also provides the basis for integrating Spanish into the 7-8's Family Study. The 7-8's learn the

words for family members and write letters to their grandparents in Spanish. When they are comparing the games and toys their parents and grandparents had at their age to their own, they are introduced to the toys and games of children in Spanish-speaking countries. They make kites Nicaraguan style, they make musical instruments using caps from soft drink bottles, and they wrap yarn around sticks to make "Ojos de Dios."

In the 8-9's where Native Americans are an important theme, the Spanish teacher works with the head teacher to develop a unit on the Tainos who lived in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba. The students are acquainted with replicas of cultural artifacts through a traveling exhibit available from the Museum of Natural History. They learn about the contexts these artifacts were used in. During the 1991-92 school year, a speaker was invited to MCS to talk about what remains of Taino culture in the traditions practiced by the "guajiro" of eastern Cuba. Having grown up in that area, José Barreiro told how his grandfather had taught him the correct way to plant yuca waiting for the waning moon. He told about herbal medicine still used by "guajira" women

The 9-10's social studies curriculum is enriched by a look into the Puerto Rican experience in New York City. They read parts of autobiographical works by important Puerto Rican authors such as Bernardo Vega and Jesús Colón. These works tell of factory life, community organizing, and social clubs when the first group of Puerto Ricans came to New York at the beginning of the twentieth century. They see a film "*The Legacy*" in which three eighty-year-olds look back at their experiences coming to New York as young adults. They listen to parts of a radio documentary on three generations of Puerto Rican women garment workers. They read a short biography of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, a Puerto Rican historian whose collection of documents is housed in the Schomburg Library on 135th Street.

Numerous trips have added to this investigation. The 9-10's first took a walking tour of El Barrio. Later they went to The Bronx Museum of the Arts to view an exhibit of "Casitas," little houses some Puerto Ricans have erected in vacant lots in the neighborhoods in which they live. These casitas are used as social centers where political, cultural, and religious traditions of bomba and plena, mask-making, and community organizing are taught to each successive generation.

They also visited "Santos de Palo: Puerto Rican Household Saints" at the American Craft Museum. Here they learned the stories of saints that are told in some Puerto Rican households. San Antonio turned on his head helps a young person find a boy or girlfriend. San Gabriel helps send messages to someone who has not been heard from in a long time. The 9-10's then discussed similar traditions in other cultures. Another trip was made to the Schomburg Library, where the African-American experience throughout the Americas can be researched in books, magazines, and photographs.

In the Upper School, the Spanish program focuses increasingly on language teaching but often through the study of cultural material. Here too, the contributions of the diverse groups making up the Latino world are explored. Sixth graders study the indigenous groups in Mexico, Central, and South America prior to the arrival of the Europeans. From this study they write research reports and perform plays for younger classes. Later, they read about the "libertos," free Africans who came on the Spanish ships to Latin America. They read folktales now told in Mexico, but originally from Mozambique.

In the seventh and eighth grades, the curriculum is influenced in part by the need to prepare for the New York State Proficiency Test administered at the end of eighth grade. Every effort is made to extend the conversational and grammar requirements required to prepare for this test into a cultural arena. For the past five

years, 47 students going on to public secondary schools and planning to continue studying Spanish have taken the New York State Proficiency test. Only four have not scored the requisite 85% to receive advanced placement.

Outside speakers are invited periodically to give new perspective to the study of Spanish language and culture. In the 1991-92 school year, José Barreiro, a Cuban of mixed indigenous and European descent, spoke about the resistance and revolts organized by the Caribbean peoples against the Spanish colonialists. His second presentation focused on the role of the Iroquois Law of Peace in the writing of the American Constitution. The previous year, Ray Hooker, from Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast region told of the struggles of African and Miskito peoples against the Contras.

Notes

1. This section on the MCS Farm is based on an enthusiastic and impressively detailed description of the Farm program by its director, Virginia Scheer.

2. Children begin visiting the farm in the 7-8s class, starting with three days that year. In the 8-9s and 9-10s the children spend two separate weeks at the Farm, and from fifth grade on they spend three separate weeks.

Conclusion

MCS and the "Real World"

Creating and maintaining a school like MCS has been an undoubtedly rewarding process for its founders and its staff, as well as for the students who have experienced the School's multicultural program firsthand over the years. It has also sometimes been a difficult and highly demanding process. The experience of the Black Caucus sketched out earlier in this report is one example of how internal divisions can place stress on efforts to maintain the ideals of democratic community on which the School stands. But those internal divisions were not merely the results of the demands of a few disgruntled parents; rather, they exemplified divisions in American society itself.

It is not too much to say we live in a society divided against itself in many ways. If there is a "common core" culture to America, as Schlesinger, Hirsch, Glazer and other neoconservative writers hope, it is difficult to identify which cultural features are part of that common core and which are not. When we look at what these "mainstream" critics want to include in "American culture," we find they exclude a good deal of the cultural variety others believe is part of the richness of a diverse society. It is not that these critics preach intolerance of difference; rather, they want "non-mainstream" people to keep their non-English languages and their "non-mainstream cultures" out of the public arena; their languages and cultures are okay at home, but not in school. Hence the critics' opposition to bilingual programs and multicultural curricula.

Perhaps mainstream culture is represented and displayed in our mass media. Perhaps television sitcoms, sports events, soap operas, and personality talk shows are the real "common core" of American culture. There we do see "the other" represented in sitcoms like the Bill Cosby Show and, if you have cable, Spanish television networks which mirror their English-speaking counterparts. Cable even offers rap videos. Certainly, television consumes much of the waking moments of large numbers of Americans from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Television, in particular, has become a major cultural force in American life, though other influential manifestations of popular culture include movies, popular magazines, comic books, and even our daily newspapers.

Yet, the commercialism of popular culture — which has far more profound influences on the minds of young people than the euphemistic phrase "entertainment" can convey — represents one of the major contradictions of our society. Whereas "traditional culture" has the purpose of ensuring the survival of the group, commercial culture's primary motivating force is to make a profit for its owners and investors.

Culture involves those ways of knowing, thinking and acting that are passed on from generation to generation. Culture always therefore involves an educational element at its core. Both traditional and commercial forms of culture in American society are educative forces. Yet, commercial culture wishes only to turn us into consumers. Commercial culture aims at creating "needs" that can only be satisfied through the consumption of products produced for profit. Survival of the group is irrelevant, as long as there are individual consumers. Commercial culture does not ignore groups, of course. Commercial culture will gladly exploit the symbols of traditional cultures for its own purposes. Commercial culture will gladly create large groups of people who share the same desires, as long as those desires mesh neatly with the profit motive. But adaptation of the group to the material conditions in which it finds itself is not at the heart of commercial culture. Or rather, commercial culture wishes to provide a particular kind of adaptation, one in which consumers spend money that can be accumulated into mountains of capital which ultimately get redistributed unequally among the different social classes of our society. So commercial culture has therefore a serious stake in inequality. Commercial culture seeks to replace traditional cultures, and although cultural diversity is not only acceptable but can be put to good (i.e., profitable) use, it really doesn't matter to commerce whether this culture or that culture fades away, just as long as we keep producing more consumers. In these ways, commercial culture unites us as consumers, but divides us not only in terms of our access to the material resources of our society, but also in our access to the power we need to control our own destinies.

Schlesinger, Glazer, and similar writers would not, of course, consider commercial culture as representative of "American culture," yet they would be hard pressed to argue that the particular set of economic and political arrangements which underpin both our governing structures and what

they call the "business community" is not based on an unequal distribution of wealth and power. It is simply not possible to accumulate the wealth and power that some individuals and some elite groups have accumulated in this country without economic and political structures which siphon off the labors of the many for the benefit of the few. To the extent that the "mainstream" represents these divisive forces of inequality in our society, we need to be cautious about encouraging assimilation to that mainstream. It is perhaps not too much to say that those Americans who most identify with mainstream culture sorely need the infusion of other ways of being human. We need other ways of organizing ourselves into the cooperative networks that justify the nomenclature of "community,"[1] not just more goods to consume.

When we look outside the United States we also find a very diverse, as well as a very unequal, world. And we must look outside. We are not only economically linked to the rest of the world but we share many interests with the other peoples of the world. We share interests not only with the Europeans whom Schlesinger, et al would place at the center of our cultural heritage, but also with the peoples of what is variously dubbed, depending on your politics, the "Third World," or the "Southern Hemisphere," or the "developing world." For it is those peoples on whose backs the elites of the so-called Western nations have built much of their wealth over the last five centuries.

The world today also happens to be a rapidly evolving world: mass migrations, wars, new nationalisms and ethnocentrisms, new forms of capitalist exploitation, the instability of world economies, the intermingling of peoples who were heretofore strangers to each other — these are some of the powerful forces that sometimes work toward more democratic societies, and sometimes seem to challenge the very idea of democracy itself. It is this history of several centuries of economic and political linkages — including conquest, exploitation and oppression — that explains the rapidly changing cultural and ethnic configurations we see in the U. S. and world societies today. To deny these changing patterns of diversity, to try to force assimilation under the code word of "unity," to neglect the cultural resources offered by the new diversity out of fear of the dangers new nationalisms bring us, is simply to collude in the reproduction of a world history that has too often divided us against ourselves as human beings.

There are divisions of attitude, consciousness and understanding which go very deep into the psyches of Americans just because they are so intertwined with the things that matter most to human beings: their material and intellectual well-being *as* humans. The founders of MCS recognized many of these divisions, particularly the race and class and caste divisions in U. S. society, and the inescapable ways in which the psychology of racism is all knotted up with the inequalities of a society whose wealth owes so much to the African slaves. But the founders were also inspired by messages of hope as expressed in the speeches of a Martin Luther King, the transcendental writings of an Emerson, the progressive educational vision of a John Dewey. MCS's founders, it is clear from the archives, began with the recognition that racism was part of the foundation of our society and with the ardent desire to contribute to erasing it. They also recognized that racism could not be erased without also eliminating inequalities of access and opportunity.

This initial vision put MCS miles ahead of the public schools in New York City. And the new school would be highly innovative within the world of private schools as well. That vision led not only to a beginning, but initiated a process which fostered the making of new beginnings of various sorts throughout the School's nearly thirty-year history. MCS staff seem to me quite proud of their School, but I haven't seen much in the way of arrogance. They are not smug. What I have heard MCS staff say about the School's history is, "It's been a learning

process." They treat this utterance as a joke; they smile or laugh and glance at you out of the corners of their eyes, perhaps to gauge your reaction. My reaction is simple: it is the ability of this staff to keep itself open to the ongoing history of our contemporary world that has made it possible for them to learn and change and create new things in the School, and to respond to the changing dimensions of need and conflict and creativity in our world over these last three decades.

Those have often been difficult decades for the U. S. and world societies, as well as for MCS itself. But the eagerness to guide their students along "the course that they will run" provides MCS staff with the motivation to learn. Teachers especially must have that willingness to learn and to engage in those intermittent conversations regarding what the School is all about that go on formally and informally; otherwise, they will not survive at MCS. They must be willing to learn not only from their mentors and their peers, but from the children themselves. To the extent a teacher has the ability to engage with children in conversation — the kind of conversation that allows the child to say what is on his or her mind, to elaborate on his or her experience — that teacher will have a real chance to succeed at MCS.

But this openness to new ideas, this eagerness to help light the course which the student must also find by traveling and exploring, this desire to talk *with* children — these essential characteristics of an MCS teacher — could not survive unless there were a *culture* within the School itself that fostered openness. That culture does exist at MCS, and it is secured by the important concept of the School as a community. Running throughout this community and its culture, like a warm current deep in the bed of a cool and fast-flowing river, are a vision of social equality and a sense of possibility which spread when that vision takes in our human diversities. To stretch the metaphor, that vision may be seen as the underground source deep below the river's bed out of which the warm current springs. That source reaches deep into the intellectual history of U. S. society itself.

Well, metaphors are an oblique way of talking about cultures, and of course when we talk about a school "having" a culture, we don't mean this is identical to our notion of traditional cultures. But in a very real sense, schools do have cultures too. Or at least, each school does its own spin on the culturally diverse world that makes up our society today. To some extent we can specify what a school's culture consists of: certain values, certain beliefs, certain ways of looking at things, certain ways of taking things for granted, certain ways of behaving, etc. These are the mostly invisible aspects of a culture — invisible to those who create and live by the culture. But through study we can make some of them visible. Yet in doing so, we necessarily distort what a culture *is*. Culture is, by its nature, more or less oblique and implicit: like the grammars of our language, we "know" the rules and ways of our culture because we know how to act in different situations. But our knowledge is mostly beneath the surface of our awareness, and just as we cannot state more than a few of the simpler rules of the languages we fluently speak, we usually cannot make available to our conscious awareness what the culture "tells us to do." No wonder we sometimes look for metaphors when it comes to conveying what a particular culture is "all about."

School cultures have this implicit aspect also, but being institutions embedded in larger cultural spheres, much of what goes into the creation of a culture for a school needs to be made explicit. Policies must be set, practices monitored, constraints imposed. No institution can exist without some rules and guidelines. But when this policy is founded on the kind of vision that informs the everyday life world of MCS, it clearly becomes possible to create a school culture of openness. Without this openness I don't think an institution can create a valid educational program for its students. And that MCS clearly seems to have accomplished.

The willingness to grow — *qualitatively* — is most obviously demonstrated by some of the more prominent events in the history of the School. I'm referring to such events as the two "Black Caucus" discussions that at the time may well have been seen as "uprisings" or "rebellions," depending on one's perspective. I'm also referring to the tuition reform policy developed in the early years of the School, and the gender equity project (SEED) that is ongoing now and has projected a five-year plan of discussion and change. Each of these represents a major accomplishment of the institution itself. But, if my descriptions of the curriculum and other aspects of learning at MCS are at all adequate, it ought to be obvious that these occasions, which may sometimes seem to steal the limelight in our historical account of the School in Chapter Two, represent only the very tip of the iceberg. Underneath we find it is the daily life of the School's community that makes these events — and their successful resolution — possible.

In tossing metaphors at MCS's culture, perhaps we would do better to discard the notion of "levels" and simply say that all these features of the culture are of equal value and importance over the long run. While one aspect or another may come to the forefront in the minds of MCS staff at one time or another, together they form over time a unity of vision and practice, conversation and act. If we want to identify a "center" for the culture, we might cite the visionary pedagogical philosophy I described in Chapter Two. But we need not give that priority to recognize its importance. The openness, the eagerness, the ability to talk with children that MCS teachers have are of equal importance, and no vision of any kind — certainly not MCS's — can be sustained without these qualities of action found in the everyday world of the School. In any case, it is the special combination of these features into the daily life world that is renegotiated and recreated by those who participate in the School as members of a community. And it is these ongoing, ordinary, and everyday processes of conversation and act within a particular vision of what is, and what could be, with which MCS confronts the beautiful and damaged world in which we live today.

MCS confronts that world with its particular realizations of its vision of the possibilities as well as the difficulties of our human diversity. In that sense it may well be taken as a model, and certainly this report has all along had the aim of — if not setting forth MCS as paradigmatic of what all schools should be — at the very least, inserting the School's educational visions and programs and practices into the public discourse on education that is going on in our society today.

MCS as a Model

It is no wonder that its staff considers MCS a model for other schools, and not only for private schools but for the public schools as well. In fact, most especially for the public schools. What sort of model or "paradigm" can MCS be for other realms of formal education in our society? After all, it is only one small school and, however public its mission, it is still a private school. There are some barriers to the dissemination of the MCS model, both in the sector of nonprofit private schools[2] and in that of public education.

MCS might seem most directly a model for private schools. But the barriers there are immense. First of all, to adopt the MCS program, private schools would have to change their financial policies. As of now, most nonprofit private schools base their expenditures on their income, and most of their income is generated through their tuitions. Yes, they do sometimes offer scholarships to a few poverty children, and many try to attract some students of color through their scholarship programs. But that policy tends to create a two-tiered class structure within the institution itself. If other private schools are also "communities" — as many of them would claim — they are very different kinds of communities than the one MCS strives to create.

Diversity must therefore have a rather different meaning in such schools, even when they try to offer multicultural education.

And that illuminates another barrier to private schools adopting the MCS perspective: the goal of most private schools is not to contribute to building equality in our society, but rather to train the children of elites to be elites when they grow up and to "run things." To the extent that this is true of private schools (and of course there are degrees of exception to this general characterization, though I would defend its fundamental premises), they will have a different perspective on U. S. society, on the world, on history, on culture, on diversity than that which MCS has created over its three decades. While some of them may rejoice in their facility at teaching "critical thinking" as well as the "skills" (read elite culture) needed to become an elite, the critique of the contemporary and historical world allowed to staff and students must fall far short of what can be achieved at MCS.

So there are practical as well as ideological barriers to the extension of the MCS model to nonprofit private schools.

From the beginning MCS had included a concern with public education as part of its mission. We saw that the founders had originally thought of developing a public school, but after some research into the New York City public schools, decided that it would not be feasible or at least was not worth the uphill battle it probably would have been.

In recent years, as I previously noted, MCS has revived its concern with public schools by developing working links with some of the schools in East Harlem, Yorkville, the Lower East Side, and Washington Heights in Manhattan through its Public School Outreach Program. We saw in Chapter Four, for example, how MCS students work together with students in P. S. 151 on the "Living the Dream" Book Award program each year. MCS also, of course, has its sister school in Tipitapa, Nicaragua, which is also a public school. Yet again, there are many practical and ideological complexities involved in extending the MCS model to public schools.

Most obvious is the problem of integrating schools which, not only in New York City but all around the country, are often racially segregated. How do we get a mix of children in our public schools that reflects not simply whatever diversity is in the surrounding environs of each school, but the diversity of the city and the wider society as well? I work as a consultant in some schools in the south Bronx, and one of these schools is situated in a network of neighborhoods which are themselves ethnically and racially segregated: African Americans in the nearby towers of a public housing project; Dominicans in a neighborhood contiguous with the northwestern territories of the African-American neighborhood; and a Puerto Rican neighborhood contiguous with its northeastern boundaries. There are few whites living in the area.

Within this south Bronx school itself, one does find a mix of these children in the mainstream classes. Yet those are perforce classes where English is the language of instruction. Latino children classified as "limited-English-proficient" are found in bilingual classrooms; and of course there are no African Americans there. I am all for bilingual education, but the standing policy of seeing bilingual classrooms as merely a way to help children make the "transition" to English makes it impossible to educate Limited-English-Speaking Latino children together in the same classrooms with African-American children. That does a disservice to both, and although there have been alternative "dual language" programs developed in other schools by bilingual educators that could be used to bring more of these children together, such programs are few and far between. Yet such programs could help African-American children in the south Bronx school learn some Spanish — not a bad idea, considering the partial isolation of the

three groups described above in the local neighborhoods.

Beyond this problem, there are no white children in the school at all, and the children in the school have little experience with white children. These structures of segregation that are embedded in our public schools are profoundly and intimately linked to other structures we use to generally separate people in our society — political, economic, ethnic, linguistic, and gender structures. They will not be easy to change and they constitute profound barriers to the direct application of the MCS model to public education. That is not, by the way, the fault or a limitation of MCS itself.

Inequalities between public schools for children of color and for white children are also rather grave, as Jonathan Kozol demonstrated in *Savage Inequalities,* an exposé of school finance. Kozol found that even in the same district in the Bronx, a school with a predominant number of children of color had many less resources than a school whose student population was white and, by comparison, much better off financially.[3] To address these inequalities — and they must be addressed sooner or later — will be a major undertaking.

Which brings to mind yet another barrier to implementing the MCS program in the public schools, particularly in New York City: the vast, essentially conservative, and extremely convoluted bureaucracy that governs the public schools. Such complex bureaucratic structures are created out of the complex to-and-fro of city politics, with some political forces pulling the schools one way, and others another way. The public schools tend to be passed from the hands of one constituency to those of another, often through the kind of bitter "debates" we saw over the rehiring and subsequent firing of Chancellor Joseph Fernandez in New York City.

That the institutional structures within the public schools are products of political tensions between different interests means that any curriculum or educational program coming forth out of a vision of engendering equality in U. S. society is going to be viewed by many as too "political." Whatever the public schools must be, they must not be political. Educational policy is set by a process of political maneuvering, organizing, campaigning and proselytizing. Anything that smacks of the "political" is seen as favoring one side over others in the battles that go on between various elite and powerful social sectors. More important, anything that smacks of social change is suspect because many people have an investment in the very structures of social inequality that have led to so much public school failure.

Maintaining political "neutrality" is part of the ideology of public schooling in this country. Most of us can probably agree that we do not want young people indoctrinated by any particular political viewpoint or philosophy, but young people generally have to wait until they reach the college level before they encounter and can participate in serious political controversies over the nature of our history, our contemporary society, and our future. And then they are more likely to find this openness to ideas in elite private universities than in public community and four-year colleges. Yet how can they learn to understand the diversities and differences that exist in the world today without dealing with these controversies? At MCS, students begin the process of engaging the political discourse of our society, as we have seen, even before the fifth grade. Yet, if we believe MCS's students are being "indoctrinated," I have not done my job well in this report.

Public schools are not now meant to be agents of social change, nor were they when they first began to develop into the network of formal institutions we know today back in the nineteenth century. Horace Mann in 1837, for example, did not see the "common school" — which was really the progenitor of our present-day public school system — as a means of changing the structures of U. S. society, and certainly not of overcoming inequality. Yet Mann and other educational reformers of the nineteenth century were very con-

cerned about the unequal distribution of wealth in the society. They were most particularly worried about the "unruly" and "riotous" working-class groups who sometimes expressed their dissatisfactions through public violence in the streets. Mann believed the solution to inter group conflict was to educate the children of the working classes in the "Republican" values that were, to him, the strengths of our society — piety, justice, love of country, benevolence, sobriety, industry, frugality, chastity, moderation and temperance. Everyone would come to share what some blithely refer to these days as a "common core culture," hence the term "common school." As far as Mann was concerned, in this way the schools would "disarm the poor of their hostility towards the rich."[4]

While it would be too simplistic to say the public schools still are grounded in a social philosophy and pedagogy that emphasize the inculcation of a "common culture" as Horace Mann would have defined it, at the expense of the cultivation and understanding of social and cultural differences, it is certainly true that public education as a whole in this country continues to have its difficulties in dealing with diversity. No more than elite private schools, then, has public schooling had any sort of mission to contribute to social change.

Yet this, in my view, is what we need to do with public education. We should no longer be thinking of education as training the younger generations to "take their place" in an already existing structure of "places" in our society, but rather to think in terms of changing those structures where needed. But this may be too strong medicine for public education. We need to rethink what public education is all about in this society. I believe that this is where MCS can play its most important role.

MCS has taken a unique perspective on the question of diversity in contemporary societies which ought to be taken up in our debates over public schooling. It is not really a question of simply "applying" the MCS model directly to the public schools, nor would MCS staff advocate such a move. Nor would it be particularly useful to adopt or adapt some of MCS's specific curriculum contents or instructional strategies without understanding how they evolved in the School's history and what place they have within the School's mission. What is most especially valuable is the ability MCS has demonstrated, as an institution and as a community, to confront our diversities with diversity itself. I mean by this that wherever MCS finds the kind of diversity that results in inequalities, it draws on the kinds of diversity that enrich our understanding of these inequalities and that help us think about ways of overcoming them. MCS is doing what public schools have so far failed to do: make use of diversity to understand diversity, and use that understanding to build a community that invites equal and active participation from all its inhabitants.

To the extent that we do live in a world deeply divided in so many ways, "diversity" cannot be a neutral term. The struggles, dreams, debates, discussions, programs, and experiences that have made MCS what it is also have made it a highly relevant example, not only of what can be done to create "education for democracy," but of how obstacles to that vision can arise, of how to confront and work through those obstacles, and of how to create solutions that "activate" a vision. I think it is important that we have institutions like MCS so that democratic voices can still be heard in the cacophony as the world moves towards whatever political, economic and cultural forms will emerge in the next decades.

The founders of MCS identified education, as did John Dewey before them, as a key element in the democratization of human societies. Education will inevitably play an important role in our future, as it has in the past, and it makes sense that, if we want to change the way things are, we have to include education as a strong agent of that change. As far as I am concerned, education is not really education at all if it does not see itself as an agent of social change in a society that has not yet lived

up to its founding ideals. For if it is not an agent of change, it will perforce be an agent of the status quo.

> That our school must provide continuous academic and social learning related to pluralism is indisputable. Healthy self-concepts, strong racial identity and awareness, knowledge of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and a grasp of the horrendous personal, racial and institutional injustices of our past and present society: these objectives must assume paramount importance in our school's total curriculum. Among its principal, stated aims the social studies program of our upper school is designed to "prevent the closing of minds and the unthinking acceptance of the racist and nationalist viewpoints which dominate our society today and to implant in every child the seed of a rational anger at the present state of world affairs.[5]

Cornell West captures this dualistic perspective on diversity and difference in his characterization of the need for a "prophetic framework" which will provide guidelines for fighting racism and create democracy in the U. S.:

> A prophetic framework assumes neither a black essence that all black people share nor one black perspective to which all black people should adhere. Rather, a prophetic framework encourages moral assessment of the variety of perspectives held by black people and selects those views based on black dignity and decency that eschew putting any group of people or culture on a pedestal or in the gutter. Instead, blackness is understood to be either the perennial possibility of white-supremacist abuse or the distinct styles and dominant modes of expression found in black cultures and communities.[6]

MCS set forth not only to be a different kind of school, but to be an institution that would make a difference in the wider U. S. society. Like Emerson, Thoreau, Dewey, King and the many other voices of "practicing democracy" who are heard throughout the various expressions of the School's multicultural program, MCS has tried to become a living example of "putting democracy into practice." In this sense it may well be said to have created a "prophetic framework" that goes beyond conceptualization into everyday practice.

Notes

1. The term "community" has now been coopted by business interests: what used to be called the "capitalist class" now is often touted by journalists and promoters as the "business community."

2. I will ignore those "private for-profit" schools that some business and educational "leaders" (such as a former president of Yale University) are trying to develop; to me, education for profit is a contradiction in terms, as might well be surmised from my glance at "commercial culture" above.

3. Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*, New York: Crown, 1991.

4. My account of Mann's educational goals is based on the well-documented discussion by historian Michael B. Katz, *Reconstructing American Education*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.

5. Augustus Trowbridge, Memo: *To members of the Black Caucus at Manhattan Country School, Feb. 23*, Fall 1970

6. Cornell West, "Black Leadership and the Pitfalls of Racial Reasoning," in Toni Morrison (ed.), 1992, op. cit.